Rivista interdisciplinare di studi romantici

La questione Romantica

Wars and Peace

Nuova Serie
Vol. 16, n. 1/2
(Gennaio-Dicembre 2024)

Liguori Editore

Volume pubblicato con il contributo dell'Università di Bari Aldo Moro - Dipartimento di Ricerca e Innovazione Umanistica e dell'Università di Bologna - Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Culture Moderne

Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Napoli n. 4696 del 9-11-1995

«La questione Romantica» is a Peer-Reviewed Journal

Nuova Serie Volume 16 *anno* 2024 *numero* 1/2

ISSN 1125 - 0364 (edizione a stampa)
eISSN 2037 - 691X (edizione digitale)

Periodicità Semestrale

Amministrazione e diffusione:
Liguori Editore - Via Riviera di Chiaia, 95 - I 80121 Napoli NA
http://www.liguori.it/
Informazioni per la sottoscrizione di abbonamenti dircomm@liguori.it

Prima edizione italiana Dicembre 2024
Stampato in Italia da Global Print, Gorgonzola (MI)

ISBN 978 - 88 - 207 - 7095 - 2 (a stampa)
eISBN 978 - 88 - 207 - 7096 - 9 (eBook)

La carta utilizzata per la stampa di questo volume è inalterabile, priva di acidi, a ph neutro, conforme alle norme UNI EN Iso 9706 ∞, realizzata con materie prime fibrose vergini provenienti da piantagioni rinnovabili e prodotti ausiliari assolutamente naturali, non inquinanti e totalmente biodegradabili (FSC, PEFC, ISO 14001, Paper Profile, EMAS).

Sommario

Editors' Introduction/Editoriale

Franca Dellarosa and Carlotta Farese[1]

Oh Peace! And dost thou with thy presence bless
The dwellings of this war-surrounded Isle;
Soothing with placid brow our late distress,
Making the triple kingdom brightly smile?
Joyful I hail thy presence; and I hail
The sweet companions that await on thee;
Complete my joy—let not my first wish fail,
Let the sweet mountain nymph thy favorite be,
With England's happiness proclaim Europa's liberty.
Oh Europe, let not sceptred tyrants see
That thou must shelter in thy former state;
Keep thy chains burst, and boldly say thou art free;
Give thy Kings law—leave not uncurbed the great;
So with the honors past thou'lt win thy happier fate
[Keats 2009, p. 3].

Thus John Keats, writing in the wake of Napoleon Bonaparte's first abdication in April 1814, reflected on the newly attained end of hostilities (the Peace of Paris would be signed on 30 May), which England – for over twenty years a «war-surrounded Isle» – had just begun to enjoy. Celebrations and festivities going on in London and across the country were reported and magnified in newspapers and magazines – including *The Examiner*, where they were chronicled and commented on by Leigh Hunt, from his detention in Surrey Gaol – and would continue throughout the summer [Cox 2014, pp. 160-167; Bugg 2022, pp. 154-159]. The repercussions for Britain of the approaching end of twenty-year warfare had been debated in periodicals and pamphlets, where public opinion was formed, staunch pro-war positions opposing a vociferous, variegated community of «Friends of Peace» across the country [Cookson 1982]. In Keats's early sonnet, the speaker rejoices

[1] Franca Dellarosa is author of sections I and III; Carlotta Farese is author of section II.

in the new, 'blessed' circumstance attending the entire country («the triple kingdom») at last, by addressing the embodied allegory of Peace with a plea for the preservation of the «mountain nymph» – that is, with its Miltonian echo, Liberty [cf. Keats 2009, p. 3, n. 3] – that accompanies her across the space of an allegorized «Europa». The transition from allegory to history is marked by the passage from the rarefied, quasi-mythological situation where Peace, Liberty, and Europa 'haply' coexist, for the happiness of England – to the direct address to the «Europe» of nation states that occupies the final section of the sonnet (ll. 10-15). The 'real thing' is now at stake. The governance – in the name of the peoples? – of Europe are called to action, to preserve the blessing of liberty from the voraciousness of their «sceptred tyrants», whose dominance must not be left «uncurbed». Kings must be made to exert their power within the limits of the rule of law. And whether in the final line the reading «honors» is kept, or is conversely emended to «horrors» [cf. Keats 2009, p. 3, n. 6], the reader is left with the sense that the word itself is ultimately undecidable, and the 'honors' and 'horrors' of the past may well be conceived as coinciding.

Keats's sonnet, in its complexity, captures many contemporary concerns that were soon to mark the definition of post-Napoleonic world order. «Histories of Romanticism should be written in blood»: as Paul Youngquist's insightful aphorism [2016: 1] highlights, the crucial turn of the nineteenth century was in many ways defined by conflict, in its manifold manifestations. So was its literature, which seems to be one major reason for its enduring significance, to our days. At the crossroads of modernity, the Romantic era points to our time, in defining its paradoxes. The sense of abiding values and freedoms underlying the modern notion of human rights developed at the same time as imperial powers expanded and millions of individuals were subjected and enslaved, and the growing consumer culture of the period «was built upon military force and the aggressive opening of international markets as European militaries began their inexorable ascendancy over the globe» [Russell and Ramsay 2015, pp. 1-2]. Much of Romantic-era culture and literature engaged, in one way or another, in adjusting to these processes, against the ethical and political horizon of a dawning human rights discourse – which addressed both the rights of individuals and peoples, coextensively with the emergence of Britain's earliest continued and popular peace movement.

The inescapable presence and central significance of war discourse in Romantic-era writing have been recognized in relatively recent times. A number of landmark critical studies and anthologies, starting with the three hundred and fifty poems collected in Betty Bennett's *British War Poetry in the Age of Romanticism, 1793-1815* [1976], have constructed over the last few decades a growing body of primary sources and diversified scholarly research. The field has recently expanded its scope to include 'peace', alongside war discourse, as an especially productive focus, responding to an increasing attentiveness

towards «the thoughtful writing about peace that threads to the period as well», as John Bugg observes [2022, p. 3] reviewing the latest scholarly elaborations in the opening pages of his recent, thought-provoking study, *British Romanticism and Peace*.[2] This special issue of *La Questione Romantica* aims to join the conversation, by addressing the topic from a variety of methodological and disciplinary perspectives, ranging from theatre and performance history, to culture-bound readings of individual writers, texts, and professional experiences; tracing the resonances of Romantic poetry across time in Wilfred Owen's «poetry of witness» [Wu and Forché 2014], and offering novel approaches to canonical authors; broadening the scope to include essays in historically-bound as well as cross-historical discourse analysis. Most of the articles included in this «Wars and Peace» collection were originally presented in a conference under this heading, in the series of the *Spring Seminars on Romanticism*, which was held in Bari on 17-18 May 2023.

II. In the opening article of this collection, Michael Gamer discusses the unwanted effects of the increasingly strict censorship exercised by the state on theatrical texts in the eighteenth century, which, on the other hand, encouraged the success of new genres such as pantomime, burletta, and melodrama. These were difficult to control as they relied on non-verbal communication to convey new ideas and potentially controversial content, such as the satirical representation and criticism of contemporary society. The case of melodrama is particularly interesting: it was imported to London theatres from France in the aftermath of the Treaty of Amiens (1802) and the first English adaptations of French original texts reflect the hopes of reconciliation encouraged by that short-lived period of peace. After the treaty was broken and war resumed in the summer of 1803, the genre survived, but the new melodramas composed by English authors on English soil are very different from their earlier imported French counterparts, as they adopt a more warlike language and uncompromising politics.

The language of war is the focus of the essays by Anna Anselmo, Gaetano Falco and Francesco Meledandri, which are both based on qualitative and quantitative corpora analysis. Anselmo analyses the linguistic construal of the battle of Waterloo in the first reports and reactions of the London-based newspapers on 22 June 1815, when news of the battle reached the capital. The digitization and analysis of the corpus through the LancsBox software is followed by an insightful discussion of the results, which draws on social actor theory to contextualize the language of the press within the cultural framework of the Napoleonic Wars. The article shows how texts in the corpus provide a

[2] The study opens with a concise but detailed survey of the secondary literature on the topic [Bugg 2022, pp. 1-3]. See also the select Bibliography, below.

socially and politically biased textual representation of battle, victory, defeat and loss, intended as social practices performed by identifiable social actors.

Falco and Meledandri's article, on the other hand, shows very clear evidence of the relevance of Romantic-era discourses on war to contemporary concerns. Using corpus-based critical discourse analysis, it explores the linguistic representation of war across different genres from the 18th century to the present, demonstrating how political and military leaders forge specific narratives to legitimize the war and condition its perception. While the first case study focuses on the linguistic structures underlying the exhortative rhetoric of the Napoleonic wars, the second examines from a diachronic perspective a variety of war-related texts ranging from the Napoleonic era to contemporary times. The analysis identifies the linguistic patterns through which institutional language shapes the very ideas of war and peace, two concepts that appear to be constantly and intimately intertwined, confirming our conclusion that the discourse of war necessarily engages with a discourse of peace.

Discourse analysis is also central to Marco Canani's reflection on the political pamphlets P. B. Shelley produced before and after the trauma of the Peterloo massacre – from *An Address to the Irish People* (1812) to the posthumously published *A Philosophical View of Reform* (1820). Canani's examination of Shelley's discursive and rhetorical strategies illustrates how the revolutionary language of his earlier poetry is gradually superseded by the linguistic construal of a sustainable form of progressivism based on a reformist agenda that, while recognising the need for change and the reality of class conflict, embraces an ethics of nonviolence and pragmatic gradualism.

The idea of political reform emerging from Shelley's political writings might appear to share some features with the more conservative political vision of Achim von Arnim as illustrated by Roswitha Burwick. The fierce anti-Napoleonic stance he took as a journalist and newspaper editor was based on the conviction that the final victory over Napoleon should provide an opportunity not only to reform Prussian institutions and transform them into a constitutional monarchy, thus granting freedom and agency to its citizens, but also an opportunity to build a new European order that would bring peace and prosperity to the nations through cooperation and interdependence. However, unlike Shelley, the German writer does not focus on social justice as a major concern and a goal to be pursued with nonviolent means, but rather on war as a legitimate defense of national identity, and the precondition for a new age of reconciliation and peace in Europe similar to the one welcomed by Keats in the epigraph of this editorial. In Arnim's discourse, war and peace are thus once again intertwined and the former is presented as the painful but inevitable process that will create the conditions for the latter.

The understanding of war as necessary to peace can also be found in the writings of the Devonian prophetess Joanna Southcott, who reframed it in

terms of religious and prophetic discourse. She defined the conflict with Napoleon as a «just war» against the Antichrist, whose defeat would usher in an age of peace and prosperity. As Manuela D'Amore argues in her engaging overview of Southcott's millenarianism, one of its most interesting features consists in its gender-conscious character: the new, post-war social order she foresees would involve the empowerment of women in the religious and political spheres.

The Natural Daughter (1799), Mary Robinson's last novel discussed by Valentina Pramaggiore, chimes with Southcott's proto-feminist agenda although it does not endorse her positive judgement on the war. Robinson condemns war not only as a destructive consequence of patriarchy, but also as an element that further reinforces the dysfunctional and oppressive social order of which it is a product. Far from creating the conditions for progress and equality, as argued by Southcott, in Robinson's view war has the most dramatic impact on those who are on the margins of society: women, outcasts, workers and wounded soldiers, whose bodies are exploited and treated as disposable commodities by the ruling class.

It is precisely this tyrannical order that the figure of the «working-class intellectual» challenges and criticises. This is why, as shown by Franca Dellarosa, its emergence is perceived as posing a significant threat to the deeply unequal society of eighteenth-century Britain. Any educational or intellectual activity performed by members of the labouring class thus becomes potentially seditious, as it fosters the individual's 'discontent' and their propensity to question the legitimacy of power and privilege. The self-taught blind poet and journalist Edward Rushton, and the radical printer John M'Creery might be considered exemplary of the potential for change and self-empowerment emerging from the milieu of provincial radicalism at the turn of the nineteenth century. Their political activity and cultural production testify the vitality of the network of working-class intellectuals to which they belonged, and in which they were able to develop a common language for the vindication of universal rights and liberties against both the conservative establishment and Napoleon.

Carlotta Farese's reassessment of Wilfred Owen's ambivalent relationship to Shelley and Keats explores the relevance of the language of Romantic poetry to the devastating experience of modern warfare testified by Wilfred Owen's poetry. Although Owen's mature war poetry is often understood as implying a rejection of his youthful Romantic ideals, the map of the intricate web of intertextual references running through a poetical manifesto such as *Strange Meeting* allows us to recognise that the conversation with the dead friend staged in the poem is also a dialogue with the Romantic canon. One of the most considerable achievements of Owen's poetry is his revisionary use of Romantic language to write about a war that seems to undermine the core values of the very tradition to which the poet remains faithful.

III. The 2023 conference was the occasion to bring together students and scholars from Italian and international universities, who engaged in intense and lively debates on the many intersections that the focus on Romantic-era culture and literature 'during wartime', as reads the title of one contribution, invited us to explore. A crucial aspect that we found ourselves sharing, since the conference topic was identified and the event prepared, and then, during the conference itself and across the past year, in the process of bringing the journal together, has been the awareness that we do live 'during wartime', too. The dismay at the continuing bloodshed and displacement of countless human beings across different parts of the world has only expanded in the last year and a half, as the media chronicle new losses, new violence, new violations of the 'Rights of Man' on a daily basis. In this respect, the voices joining this number of *La Questione Romantica* for the «Poet's Corner» – Loredana Magazzeni, Leila Falà, and John Graham Davies – are especially significant, striving as they do to articulate the sense of loss and powerlessness that accompanies our days, or the sheer indignation at the brutal reiteration in Gaza of the shameless violence that makes Pablo Neruda's words, confronting the horror of Guernica, not just relevant – but a call for action, here and now – wherever the horror arises – whether in Gaza, Ukraine, or South Sudan – wherever rights are outraged and people's lives destroyed and natural as well as human environments devastated. 'Action', in the case of our work as academics, may well imply an effort towards complicating our narratives, and «proposing a new kind of history», as Youngquist suggests [2016, p. 3], that may take into account the voices of those who were silenced – alongside raising awareness in and teaching commitment to the younger generations of our students. This is the direction a 'poet of witness' like Edward Rushton invites us to take, addressing Robert Southey, «Poet Laureat on the Publication of His "Carmen Triumphale"», in that same 1814, in lines that seem to take up, and bitterly reply to John Keats's appeal to Peace, and Europe:

> Appall'd by superstitious cares,
> Despots of yore have crown'd their heirs,
> But when, oh Southey! tell me when
> Have despots raised their slaves to men?
> Vot'ries of Power, to this they bend,
> For this eternally contend;
> Whilst man, let despots rise or fall,
> Poor abject man submits to all;
> And should his wrongs beyond endurance swell,
> Here glares the State's red arm, and there an endless hell
> [Rushton 2014, p. 169, ll. 31-40].

Alongside all the contributors to this number of *La Questione Romantica*, we wish to thank all those who were involved in either/both the Conference or/and the process of bringing the journal together, including: Angela Annese, Serena Baiesi, Christopher Burwick, Nicoletta Caputo, Fernando Cioni, Lilla Maria Crisafulli, Massimiliano Demata, Mariateresa Dellaborra, Christine Farese Sperken, Maristella Gatto, Gilberta Golinelli, Greg Kucich, Fabio Liberto, Sabino Manzo, Lorenzo Mattei, Andrea Peghinelli, Alex Robinson, Diego Saglia, Barbara Sasse, Elena Spandri, Alessandra Squeo, Carlotta Susca, Franca Zanelli Quarantini.

We also wish to thank the Department of Research and Innovation for the Humanities, University of Bari Aldo Moro, and the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, University of Bologna, for their financial support to the publication of this volume.

Bibliography

Aksu, E. (2008): *Early Notions of Global Governance: Selected Eighteenth-Century Proposals for 'Perpetual Peace': with Rousseau, Bentham and Kant Unabridged*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press.

Bainbridge, S. (1995): *Napoleon and English Romanticism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Bainbridge, S. (2003): *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Visions of Conflict*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Bennett, B. (1976): *British War Poetry in the Age of Romanticism*, New York and London, Garland.

Bugg, J. (2022): *British Romanticism and Peace*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Chandler, J. (1998): *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism*, Chicago, Chicago University Press.

Clery, E. J. (2017): *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven: Poetry, Protest and Economic Crisis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Cookson, J. E. (1982): *The Friends of Peace: Anti-War Liberalism in England, 1793-1815*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Cox, J. N. (2014): *Romanticism in the Shadow of War: Literary Culture in the Napoleonic War Years,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Cox, J. N. (2023): *William Wordsworth, Second-Generation Romantic: Contesting Poetry after Waterloo*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Emsley, C. (1979): *British Society and the French Wars, 1793-1815*, London, Macmillan.

Favret, M. A. (2010): *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime*, Princeton, Princeton University Press [Kindle].

Keats, J. (2009): *Keats's Poetry and Prose*, selected and edited by J. N. Cox, New York, Norton.

Ramsay, N., and Russell, G., eds (2015): *Tracing War in British Enlightenment and Romantic Culture*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
Rushton, E. (2014): *The Collected Writings of Edward Rushton*, P. Baines, ed., Liverpool, Liverpool University Press.
Russell, G. (1995): *Theatres of War: Performance, Politics and Society, 1793-1815*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
Saglia, D. (2013): *Poetic Castles in Spain: British Romanticism and Figurations of Iberia*, Amsterdam, Rodopi.
Shaw, P., ed. (2000): *Romantic Wars: Studies in Culture and Conflict, 1793-1822*, Aldershot, Ashgate.
Shaw, P., ed. (2002): *Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination*, Aldershot, Ashgate.
Valladares, S. (2015): *Staging the Peninsular War: English Theatres, 1807-1815*, Burlington, VT, Ashgate.
Watson, J. R. (2003): *Romanticism and War: a Study of British Romantic Period Writers and the Napoleonic Wars*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan.
White, J. R. (2008): *Pacifism and English Literature: Minstrels of Peace*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
Wu, D., and Forché, C., eds (2014): *Poetry of Witness: The Tradition in English 1500-2001*, New York, Norton [Kindle].
Youngquist, P., ed. (2016): *Romanticism, Race, and the Atlantic*, Abingdon, Routledge.

Saggi

Melodrama during Wartime[1]

Abstract

This essay first considers two well-known incidents in the history of the London stage – the creation of a patent theatre system by King Charles II, and Prime Minister Robert Walpole's Licensing Act of 1737 – in order to reflect on how even small acts of theatrical regulation can have considerable and unforeseen consequences. Seeking to address immediate issues, neither Charles nor Walpole could have imagined the effects of their actions, which eventually included ever-larger theatres and the invention of the host of dramatic genres (burletta, pantomime, extravaganza, re-enactment, trick-riding, ballet of action, and others) that dominated eighteenth- and nineteenth-century stages. Within this context, the essay then turns to melodrama, which first achieved popularity during the period of world conflict sometimes called the Napoleonic Wars. In looking to melodrama emergence in England, I ask two questions: why did a genre so strongly associated with the Parisian popular stage find its way onto English soil via London's prestigious Theatre Royals? And why did its introduction happen during the fourteen-month Peace of Amiens?

Michael Gamer

Doppler effects

Part of the reason the theatre provides an ideal forum for exploring how and why context matters to interpretation stems from the powerful ways that the stage renders cultural, economic, legal, and political forces starkly visible, even literal. We might start with the physical space itself: that theatres assemble viewers at a given venue, where they respond to a given set of works in real time. Though this is not always the case, audiences are frequently mixed, even heterogeneous – enabling people and productions, both high and low, to meet, jostle, contest, applaud, and constitute an evening of entertainment.

[1] A shorter version of this essay was originally presented in May of 2023 for the Bari Spring Seminars on "Wars and Peace" in the Romantic period. My thanks to the editors for giving me the opportunity to expand on my findings for this issue of *La Questione Romantica*.

Equally fascinating are the political, legal, and economic constraints that govern theatrical ecosystems. These forces – at least in the case of London's theatrical scene during the Romantic period – are often so bluntly conspicuous and ham-fisted that it becomes impossible to ignore them. Histories of the Romantic stage routinely point to a range of factors affecting the offerings of theatres, from theatre sizes and ticket prices to censorship regimens and middle-class morality. What is strange about most of these phenomena is that they arise from fairly distant events. As I hope to show in the first part of this essay, the authors of these remote causes could not have envisaged the impact that their actions would have on the history of theatre in London. What I describe, then, is not unlike a sort of historical butterfly effect – where fairly small actions over time produce exponentially magnified and unanticipated consequences. These accidental dilations of history, I argue, become especially important to a culture under stress, as was Britain and most of Europe as the nineteenth century turned.

At the risk of rehearsing material familiar to theatre historians, I'd like to begin by considering the impact of the 1737 Licensing Act on play offerings around 1800. As theatre regulations go, the Licensing Act came into existence thanks to the tottering ministry of Robert Walpole, who wished in the late 1730s to silence criticism by bestowing autocratic powers of censorship onto a single individual, called the Examiner of Plays. The Act was less about long-term policy and regulation than about immediate political need – a product, in other words, of strongly local and temporally specific historicities. As L. W. Conolly and others have documented, while the 1737 Act was immediately effective in silencing political criticism on the stage, it could not save the Walpole government, which by 1741 had fallen. Yet, the Licensing Act lived on, and seemed to grow stronger over time. With the years, playwrights and managers adjusted their behaviours, either by censoring themselves or by producing plays less easy to censor. Licensers, in turn, became bolder and more exacting; those of the Romantic period, John Larpent and George Colman, were known for their strict censorship of plays for anything potentially blasphemous, seditious, or politically topical.[2]

[2] See Conolly 1976, pp. 17-42. As Conolly reminds us, the Examiner of Plays was not the only possible censor of plays during the eighteenth century: "[B]efore the manuscript of a new play ever reached the Examiner, several people might have meddled with it. Managers, for example, altered texts a good deal and in so doing saved the censor a considerable amount of work [...] [E]ven if it had some merit; it might be altered or rejected, and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it frequently was, because the manager found it offensive or dangerous in some way or because he judged the Examiner or the audience would" [pp. 1-2], [see also Thomas 1969; Stephens 1980; and, most recently, O'Shaughnessy ed. 2023].

As decades passed, this increasingly vigilant regulation of the stage created interesting effects – effects particularly compelling to anyone interested in the difference between the words of a play and the full range of expressive acts that constitute a dramatic performance. The Licenser, after all, could only censor what appeared on the playscript submitted to him, and so politically-minded playwrights increasingly looked outside of the spoken word to represent new ideas and to comment on their times. The result of this, as Leigh Hunt noted in *The Examiner*, was a move toward newer genres – such as pantomime, burletta, and melodrama – that thrived on music, gesture, movement, and mimicry. «There is no such thing as modern comedy, tragedy, nor even farce; but Pantomime flourishes as much as ever», Hunt observed: «There is something *real* in Pantomime: there is animal spirit in it» [Hunt 1949 (1817), p. 140]. In this spirit, Hunt's essay concentrates primarily on the form's «fun» and «delights», waiting until its final paragraph to deliver its argument:

> Pantomime, at present, is also the best medium of dramatic satire. Our farces and comedies spoil the effect of their ridicule by the dull mistakes of the author; but the absence of dialogue in Pantomime saves him this contradiction, and leaves the spectators, according to their several powers, to imagine what supplement they please to the mute caricature before them [Hunt 1949 (1817), p. 144].

While Hunt's essay is ostentatiously about pantomime, his arguments apply as well to the host of theatrical forms introduced in the Romantic period.[3] Also noteworthy is Hunt's decision not to mention the Examiner of Plays; and yet, like Harlequin, he is everywhere. His freezing effect is felt in the absence of «modern» dramatic forms relying primarily on language, and is especially present in the «dull mistakes» of clearly fettered dialogue of an author weary of the censor's hand. What remains most remarkable, however, is the unforeseen power of a distant Act, which, though put in place eighty-two years earlier by government on the verge of losing power,

[3] To review the catalogue of new plays submitted to the Examiner of Plays between 1789 and 1815, for example, is to be struck by the steady proliferation of new theatrical genres and hybrids gracing London's Theatre Royals in these years [see Macmillan 1939]. For the 1789-90 theatrical season, Macmillan's Catalogue records 33 new plays submitted to the Examiner; these span 12 distinct genres and subgenres. The 1814-15 season, meanwhile, sees 52 new plays submitted spanning 21 genres and subgenres. The most conspicuous new genres introduced in this 25-year span are various forms of melodrama and burletta, as well as an uptick in hybrid productions of pantomime.

has come to exercise near-total sway over what is arguably the most popular artform of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And while no one would ever associate the blunt censorship of John Larpent or George Colman with the touch of a butterfly, I am certain that the Walpole administration never dreamed, by creating the Licensing Act in 1737, that over time they would be super-charging a range of emerging dramatic forms, including Pantomime, Melodrama, Ballet of Action, Aquatic Spectacle, Burletta, and Military Re-enactment.

Beyond the Licensing Act I'd now like to look further back to the creation of theatrical monopoly through the system of patents introduced by Charles II in 1660 and 1662. Charles may have re-opened London's theatres on his restoration to the British throne, but in doing so he imposed a theatrical regime that was to have vast and unforeseen effects over time. In an act of dramatic patronage, he bestowed letters patent on William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew, granting them exclusive right to produce serous drama within the metropolis. The act created a sort of healthy competition, since where there had been no theatres for over a decade there were suddenly two. With time, of course, Charles, Killigrew, and Davenant all died, but – like the Licensing Act – the patents lived on and were inherited, bought, and sold like any other kind of investment property. And over time, the question of what the patents actually granted also shifted, expanding from existing plays to what was called either 'serious' or 'regular' or 'legitimate' drama, defined as spoken performances by actors in recognizable genres. By the second half of the eighteenth century, London's two patent theatres, or Theatre Royals, claimed sole right to put on spoken dramas, while 'illegitimate' houses like Sadler's Wells and Astley's Amphitheatre were allowed only to produce musical entertainments, pantomimes, trick riding, and other spectacles comprised primarily of non-spoken performances.

It doesn't require a legal turn of mind, of course, to understand just how vague and slippery such distinctions were – and the non-patent theatres repeatedly pushed the limits of what was allowable. What if, for example, your play had words, but these words were spoken by actors using puppets? Or what if the words were sung? Or mostly sung? On that subject, what constitutes singing? Is chanting admissible, for example?

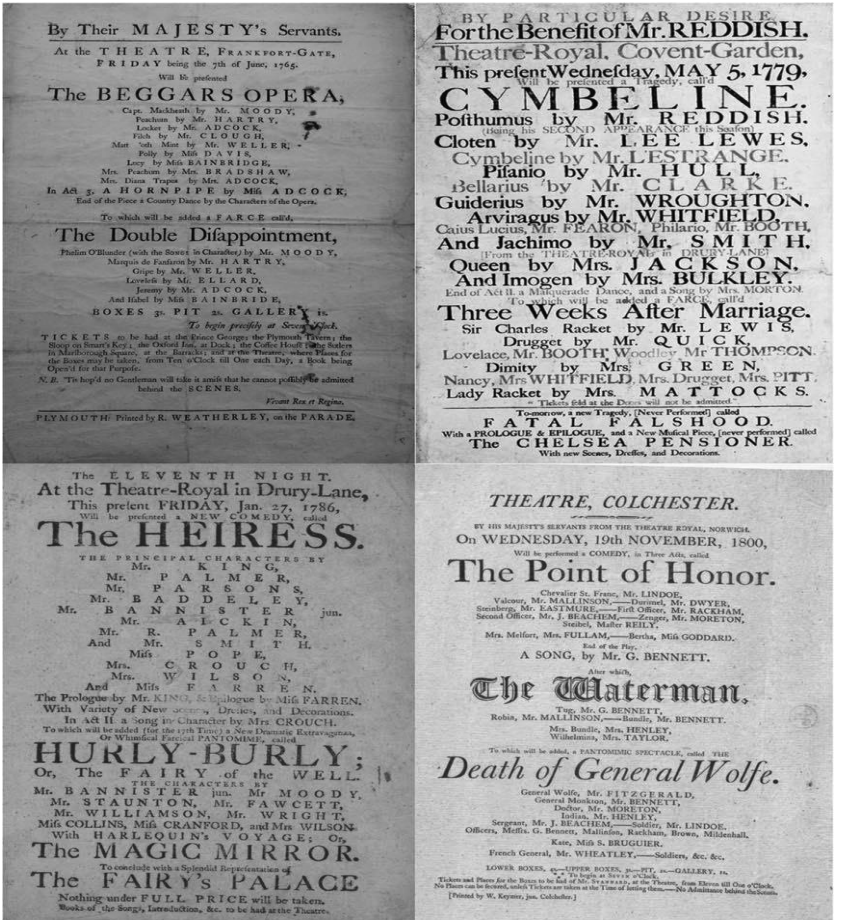
Thus, by 1800, while the monopolies remained in effect – with only Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and the summer Haymarket Theatre able to stage spoken dramas legally in London – a steady stream of challenges from newer theatres slowly eroded the distinction between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' theatre [Moody, 1996, pp. 223-244 and Moody 2000]. Still, maintaining the regime meant that as London's population quadrupled between 1660 and 1815, the number of legitimate theatres did not quadruple with it. And herein

lies a second historical irony. For, given his support of theatres and dramatic innovation, it seems likely that Charles II would have welcomed more theatres within the metropolis as London grew. Instead, his own act, in limiting their number, forced the patent theatres to increase not their number but their size – which, by the 1790s, had nearly quadrupled in order to meet increased demand.

Here it helps to have a sense of scale. Today, the Olivier Theatre, the largest of London's National Theatre complex, seats 1,100 people. In contrast, Covent Garden and Drury Lane at the turn of the nineteenth century regularly seated over 3,000 people, and on special occasions could accommodate up to 5,000. This means that Londoners in 1800 were attending plays in theatres three to four times the size of London's largest theatre for spoken drama today. They would have done so, moreover, in an age without microphones and famous for its noisy and boisterous crowds. Contemplating this distorted and distended theatrical scene, it's worth savouring the ironies at work here: that, thanks to a patent system instituted 140 years earlier, the only theatres allowed to perform spoken drama had become so large that their audiences could only imperfectly hear the voices of the performers.

As one might expect, theatre managers and actors responded by innovating. With the renovation of Drury Lane Theatre in 1794, for example, the actor-manager John Philip Kemble responded to the new theatre's cavernous size by announcing *Macbeth* for its premiere. In reviving this popular play, however, he augmented it significantly with new music, stirring effects, and a troupe of witch-dancers – fifty of them, singing and dancing in select scenes. In doing so, Kemble didn't quite create *Macbeth: The Musical*, but he did everything possible to fill the stage: with people, with stunning sets and scenery, and with music and sonic effects provided by a full orchestra. Part of the reason that his innovation was successful is that he could rely on his audience knowing the storyline and even key speeches of the play. In this way, older repertory plays could be made new, functioning as testing grounds for innovations even as they provided a veneer of stability.

At the so-called 'illegitimate' theatres, even greater innovations were occurring, the most fundamental being alterations to the structure of the theatrical evening itself. For most of the second half of the eighteenth century, both London and English provincial theatres had adopted what Jeffrey Cox has called «the whole show», where audiences would experience multiple entertainments in a given evening [Cox 1999, pp. 403-425 (403)]. As Figure 1 attests, the evening's entertainment tended to follow a predictable formula: first a mainpiece, usually a five-act tragedy or comedy; followed by a short interlude, often musical or acrobatic; and ending with a two-act afterpiece, usually a farce or pantomime:


By Their MAJESTY's Servants.

At the THEATRE, FRANKFORT-GATE,
FRIDAY being the 7th of June, 1765.
Will be presented
The BEGGARS OPERA,
Capt. Macheath by Mr. MOODY,
Peachum by Mr. HARTRY,
Lockit by Mr. ADCOCK,
Filch by Mr. CLOUGH,
Matt o'th Mint by Mr. WELLER,
Polly by Miss DAVIS,
Lucy by Miss BAINERIDGE,
Mrs. Peachum by Mrs. BRADSHAW,
Mrs. Diana Trapes by Mrs. ADCOCK,
In Act 3. A HORNPIPE by Miss ADCOCK,
End of the Piece a Country Dance by the Characters of the Opera.
To which will be added a FARCE call'd,
The Double Disappointment,
Phelim O'Blunder (with the Stones in Character) by Mr. MOODY,
Marquis de Fanfaron by Mr. HARTRY,
Gripe by Mr. WELLER,
Lovelefs by Mr. ELLARD,
Jemmy by Mr. ADCOCK,
And Mabel by Miss BAINBRIDE,
BOXES 3s. PIT 2s. GALLERY 1s.
To begin precisely at Seven o'Clock.
TICKETS to be had at the Prince George; the Plymouth Tavern; the Sloop on Sutton's Key; the Oxford Inn, at Dock; the Coffee House in the Sutors in Marlborough-square, at the Barracks; and at the Theatre, where Places for the Boxes may be taken, from Ten o'Clock till One each Day, a Book being Open'd for that Purpose.
N. B. 'Tis hop'd no Gentleman will take it amifs that he cannot poffibly be admitted behind the SCENES.
Vivant Rex et Regina.
PLYMOUTH: Printed by R. WEATHERLEY, on the PARADE.

BY PARTICULAR DESIRE,
For the Benefit of Mr. REDDISH.
Theatre-Royal, Covent-Garden,
This preſent Wedneſday, MAY 5, 1779,
Will be preſented a Tragedy, call'd
CYMBELINE.
Poſthumus by Mr. REDDISH.
(Being his SECOND APPEARANCE this Seaſon)
Cloten by Mr. LEE LEWES.
Cymbeline by Mr. LESTRANGE.
Pifanio by Mr. HULL,
Bellarius by Mr. CLARKE,
Guiderius by Mr. WROUGHTON.
Arviragus by Mr. WHITFIELD,
Caius Lucius, Mr. FEARON, Philario, Mr. BOOTH,
And Jachimo by Mr. SMITH.
From the THEATRE-ROYAL in DRURY-LANE
Queen by Mrs. JACKSON.
And Imogen by Mrs. BULKLEY.
End of Act II. a Miſquerade Dance, and a Song by Mrs. MORTON.
To which will be added a FARCE, call'd
Three Weeks After Marriage.
Sir Charles Racket by Mr. LEWIS,
Drugget by Mr. QUICK,
Lovelace, Mr. BOOTH, Woodley Mr. THOMPSON.
Dimity by Mrs. GREEN,
Nancy, Mrs. WHITFIELD, Mrs. Drugget, Mrs. PITT.
Lady Racket by Mrs. MATTOCKS.
Tickets ſold at the Doors will not be admitted.
To-morrow, a new Tragedy, [Never Performed] called
FATAL FALSHOOD.
With a PROLOGUE & EPILOGUE, and a New Muſical Piece, [never performed] called
The CHELSEA PENSIONER.
With new Scenes, Dreſſes, and Decorations.

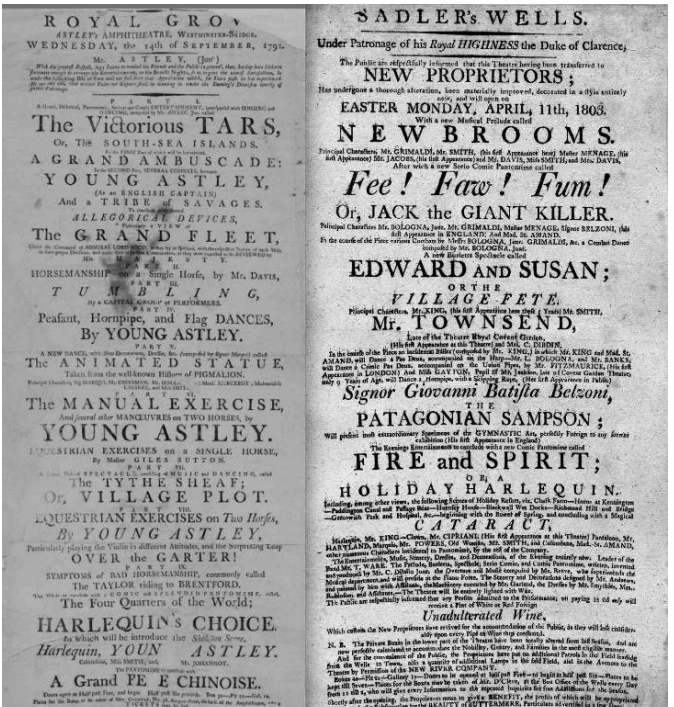
The ELEVENTH NIGHT.
At the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane,
This preſent FRIDAY, Jan. 27, 1786,
Will be preſented a NEW COMEDY, called
The HEIRESS.
THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS BY
Mr. KING,
Mr. PALMER,
Mr. PARSONS,
Mr. BADDELEY,
Mr. BANNISTER jun.
Mr. ALCKIN,
Mr. R. PALMER,
And Mr. SMITH.
Miſs POPE,
Mrs. CROUCH,
Mrs. WILSON,
And Miſs FARREN.
The Prologue by Mr. KING, & Epilogue by Miſs FARREN.
With Variety of New Scenes, Dreſſes, And Decorations.
In Act II. a Song in Character by Mrs. CROUCH.
To which will be added (for the 15th Time) a New Dramatic Extravaganza,
Or Whimſical Farcical PANTOMIME, called
HURLY-BURLY;
Or, The FAIRY of the WELL.
THE CHARACTERS BY
Mr. BANNISTER jun. Mr MOODY.
Mr. STAUNTON, Mr. FAWCETT,
Mr. WILLIAMSON, Mr. WRIGHT,
Miſs COLLINS, Miſs CRANFORD, and Mrs WILSON.
With HARLEQUIN's VOYAGE; Or,
The MAGIC MIRROR.
To conclude with a Splendid Repreſentation of
The FAIRY's PALACE
Nothing under FULL PRICE will be taken.
Books of the Songs, Introduction, &c. to be had at the Theatre.

THEATRE, COLCHESTER.
BY HIS MAJESTY'S SERVANTS FROM THE THEATRE ROYAL, NORWICH.
On WEDNESDAY, 19th NOVEMBER, 1800,
Will be performed a COMEDY, in Three Acts, called
The Point of Honor.
Chevalier St. Franc, Mr. LINDOE,
Valcour, Mr. MALLINSON,——Durimel, Mr. DWYER,
Steinberg, Mr. EASTMURE,——First Officer, Mr. RACKHAM,
Second Officer, Mr. J. BEACHEM,——Zenger, Mr. MORETON,
Steinel, Maſter REILY,
Mrs. Melfort, Mrs. FULLAM,——Bertha, Miſs GODDARD.
End of the Play,
A SONG, by Mr. G. BENNETT.
After which,
The Waterman,
Tug, Mr. G. BENNETT,
Robin, Mr. MALLINSON,——Bundle, Mr. BENNETT.
Mrs. Bundle, Mrs. HENLEY,
Wilhelmina, Mrs. TAYLOR.
To which will be added, a PANTOMIMIC SPECTACLE, called THE
Death of General Wolfe.
General Wolfe, Mr. FITZGERALD,
General Monkton, Mr. BENNETT,
Doctor, Mr. MORETON,
Indian, Mr. HENLEY,
Sergeant, Mr. J. BEACHEM,——Soldier, Mr. LINDOE,
Officers, Meſſrs. G. Bennett, Mallinſon, Rackham, Brown, Middenhall,
Kate, Miſs S. BRUGUIER.
French General, Mr. WHEATLEY,——Soldiers, &c. &c.
LOWER BOXES, 3s.—UPPER BOXES, 2s.—PIT, 2s.—GALLERY, 1s.
*** To begin at Six o'Clock.
Tickets and Places for the Boxes to be had of Mr. SAVAGE, at the Theatre, from Eleven till One o'Clock.
No Places can be ſecured, unleſs Tickets are taken at the Time of ſecuring them.—No Admittance behind the Scenes.
[Printed by W. Keymer, jun. Colcheſter.]

Figure 1: Playbills from Plymouth 1765, Covent Garden 1779, Drury Lane 1786, and Colchester 1800 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Surveying playbills from Plymouth, Covent Garden, Drury Lane, and Colchester between 1765 and 1800, Figure 1 provides two playbills from London Theatre Royals and two from provincial theatres providing similar offerings. In spite of their differing looks, they're strikingly similar at their core. Each presents its evening's entertainment sequentially: beginning with announcements (if any), name of the company (if necessary), venue, and date of the performance; followed by the genre and title of each play, its actors, and special attractions; and closing with information about ticket purchase. Each offers seven acts of drama. In three cases, the theatre offers a five-act main piece followed by shorter two-act afterpiece, although in the Theatre Colchester we might scent change in the air; it offers three pieces, the first being a shorter play of only three acts.

By way of contrast, Figure 2 features playbills from Sadler's Wells and Astley's Amphitheatre. Taken together, they nicely capture an evening of entertainment at the minor houses. Divided into ten separate parts, the Astley's 1791 bill offers «A Grand, Historical, Pantomimic, Serious and Comic ENTERTAINMENT», three dramatic sketches, a panoramic «VIEW of The GRAND FLEET», displays of horsemanship, tumbling, and dancing, and finally a «COMIC and SPLENDID PANTOMIME». Were time-travel possible, witnessing such an evening of theatre would tell us much – not just about varieties of performance and their demographics, but also about the nature of dramatic «travel» to far-flung regions. Looking to Sadler's Wells in 1803, we find an equally varied program relying more on music and movement: a «Musical Prelude», a «new Serio Comic Pantomime», a «new Burletta Spectacle», an «Incidental Ballet», and the «PATAGONIAN SAMPSON Signor Batista Belzoni», who «will present extraordinary Specimens of the GYMNASTIC Art, perfectly Foreign to any former exhibition». The evening's finale consists of «a new Comic Pantomime» called *Fire and Spirit; or, A Holiday Harlequin*, which includes a series of views that resembles a long London walk during a Covid-19 lockdown.



ROYAL GRO
ASTLEY's AMPHITHEATRE, WESTMINSTER-BRIDGE.
WEDNESDAY, the 14th of SEPTEMBER, 1791.
Mr. ASTLEY, (Jun.)
PART I.
The Victorious TARS,
Or, The SOUTH-SEA ISLANDS.
A GRAND AMBUSCADE:
YOUNG ASTLEY,
(As an ENGLISH CAPTAIN)
And a TRIBE of SAVAGES.
ALLEGORICAL DEVICES,
The GRAND FLEET,
HORSEMANSHIP on a Single Horse, by Mr. DAVIS,
TUMBLING,
Peasant, Hornpipe, and Flag DANCES,
By YOUNG ASTLEY.
The ANIMATED STATUE,
The MANUAL EXERCISE,
YOUNG ASTLEY.
EQUESTRIAN EXERCISES on a SINGLE HORSE,
The TYTHE SHEAF;
Or, VILLAGE PLOT.
EQUESTRIAN EXERCISES on Two Horses,
By YOUNG ASTLEY,
OVER the GARTER!
SYMPTOMS of BAD HORSEMANSHIP, commonly called
The TAYLOR riding to BRENTFORD.
The Four Quarters of the World;
HARLEQUIN'S CHOICE.
Harlequin, YOUN ASTLEY.
A Grand PE E CHINOISE.

SADLER's WELLS.
Under Patronage of his *Royal HIGHNESS* the Duke of Clarence,
The Public are respectfully informed that this Theatre having been transferred to
NEW PROPRIETORS;
Has undergone a thorough alteration, been materially improved, decorated in a style entirely new, and will open on
EASTER MONDAY, APRIL, 11th, 1803.
With a new Musical Prelude called
NEW BROOMS.
Fee! Faw! Fum!
Or, JACK the GIANT KILLER.
EDWARD AND SUSAN;
ORTHE
VILLAGE FETE.
Mr. TOWNSEND,
Signor Giovanni Batista Belzoni,
THE
PATAGONIAN SAMPSON;
FIRE and SPIRIT;
OR A
HOLIDAY HARLEQUIN.
CATARACT,
Unadulterated Wine,
J. HUGHES, Printer, 136 White-Cross-Street, St. Luke's.

Figure 2: Astley's Amphitheatre 14 September 1791, Sadler's Wells 11 April 1803

What we are witnessing through Figure 1 and Figure 2 are the long-term effects of the patent system expressed through playbill design. The moment we move from the Theatre Royals to the advertisements of other venues, we experience a very different theatrical evening, consisting of many different kinds of performance and new dramatic forms, which, in the absence of the spoken word, produce their effects by cultivating song, dance, movement, trick-riding, and action sequences. Gone is patent-theatre format of a mainpiece and afterpiece, replaced by a more incidental format akin to the variety show. Above all things, both theatres promise novelty, variety, and theatrical tourism, whether to the far reaches of the world or more locally.

Between Peace and War

Much as I stand by these points, I'm anxious that my two contrasting sets of playbills present a theatrical world more cleanly divided into two separate spheres than it probably was. The entities that state censorship and monopoly sought to keep separate were, throughout these years, in constant and constitutive dialogue with one another. Nowhere is this more true than with melodrama, the popular genre whose strange advent onto London stages shows us the degree to which the distinctions of 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' were already breaking down. While the reasons for this are complex, a significant factor lay in the fact that, in spite of legal prohibitions and the formidable forces of theatrical tradition (never to be underestimated), theatres like Astley's and Sadler's Wells continued to innovate and thrive. The Theatre Royals, meanwhile – in spite of their huge performance spaces and monopolistic advantages – began to poach the innovations of the smaller theatres and to appropriate their methods. Beginning its life as an import from the minor theatres of the Paris boulevards, English melodrama is, counterintuitively, an invention of the Theatre Royals. Its early years of importation thus provide an apt case study for considering this question of context and its impact on the development of new aesthetic forms. This is in part because, in the case of melodrama's early English history, a fairly overwhelming context, the Napoleonic Wars, stands large. But such an approach also grows intuitively out of the nature of theatrical performances, which, because they occur in local, physical spaces, allow us to track specific works and innovations across specific sites, so that we might see when and where ideas travelled. This is further aided by the generic tags themselves, which reside within and yet frequently move across languages, sometimes even congregating in specific urban centres.

Melodrama's importation to London theatres, however, is particularly fascinating. Rising to popularity in Paris in the late 1790s at venues like the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique and the Théâtre des Jeunes-Artistes, it did not find its way across the English Channel until the Peace of Amiens, a cease-fire

that stopped, however temporarily, nearly a decade of global war. This fragile Peace produced a surge of cross-Channel tourism comparable to, and likely exceeding, our own renewed post-pandemic travels. Some 30,000 English visited Paris over these months, with large numbers of French tourists also visiting Britain.[4] For Thomas Holcroft, then residing in Paris, this fourteen-month interruption to the war would enable him to travel to London with a new playscript: an adaptation of René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt's *Coelina*, entitled *A Tale of Mystery*. Where Pixérécourt had called his own play a «Drame en trois actes, en prose et a grand spectacle» [A Drama in prose in three acts, with a grand spectacle], Holcroft chose another term then current on the Paris boulevards for his adaptation: *Melo-drame*. *A Tale of Mystery* thus became the first self-proclaimed melodrama to appear on English soil.

Holcroft was ideally situated to introduce melodrama to English audiences. Like Samuel Coleridge, he had left England for Gottingen in Germany in the final years of the eighteenth century. Unlike Coleridge, he had not returned home, instead moving to Paris in 1800. Attending, adapting, and writing plays in both cities, he stands as one of the few English dramatists able to access both the 'German' and 'French' traditions of melodrama – the traditions of Rousseau and of the French boulevards – and to understand their fusion in Pixérécourt's work. The Covent Garden playbill for the 13 November 1802 premiere of *A Tale of Mystery* describes it as «a New Melo-Drame in Two acts, consisting of Speaking, Dancing & Pantomime, *The OVERTURE and MUSIC composed by Dr. BUSBY*». This was as much explanation as Holcroft ever provided for the term he introduced into English. In the Advertisement to the printed version of his play, he declined to define *melo-drame* or describe its tactics, leaving further comment to those who might «produce [its] effects in a more mature and perfect state» [Holcroft 1802, p. 5].

Holcroft's silence smacks partially of political coyness. Premiering his play during an anxious time, he likely wished not to threaten its success with anything like a manifesto, however ideally situated he might have been to introduce *mélo-drame* to home audiences. However much we might regret his silence, Holcroft's decision to call *A Tale of Mystery* «*melo-drame*» rather than «drama in prose» or «grand spectacle» is itself a critical decision and a decisive event in the history of the term: a recognition that he was drawing from at least one, and possibly two, theatrical modes. Like most genre choices, Holcroft's matters because it declares affinities, both to kindred texts and to its imagined audience. And in this case, his audience was one that, after nine years of war restricting the usual flow of French plays, was keen to experience the latest entertainments of Paris on home soil. In this fragile bed, Holcroft

[4] See John Goldworth Alger, *Napoleon's British Visitors and Captives 1801-1815* (New York: James Pott and Company, 1904), 25, cited in Cox 2014, pp. 26-27.

transplanted *A Tale of Mystery* at Covent Garden on 13 November 1802. By the time Britain again declared war on 18 May 1803, it had been performed thirty-four times, and would remain in the repertory for nearly half a century.

In many ways, *A Tale of Mystery* is a perfect play for an uneasy cease-fire [Cox 2014, pp. 38-42]. Though its characters face constant danger, they are able to overcome the legacies of past violence, and the threat of future violence, through vigilance and care. Holcroft's adaptation features an aggressive and rapacious villain, Count Romaldi, who, over the course of the first act, arrives uninvited, solicits Selina's hand, and then threatens her guardian Bonarmo when he is refused. During his visit he sees Francisco, the brother whom he tried to assassinate years earlier. To cover up his past violence, he plans with his servant Malvoglio to murder him that night. Selina, however, has overheard their plans, and manages later that evening to thwart this second attempt on Francisco's life. Foiled both in this second attempted murder and in his desire for Selina, Romaldi exits – but via letter asserts Selina to be the illegitimate daughter of Francisco. Bonarmo responds with his usual over-caution by banishing both Selina and Francisco from the house, further exposing them to Romaldi's violence. The sheer selfish stupidity of his act is confirmed with the entrance of Montano, who informs the remaining company of Romaldi's treachery and past violence, and proves Selina's legitimacy. At this very moment, he states, the Archers are pursuing Romaldi to arrest him – hopefully before he can abduct Selina and kill his brother.

These events set up the play's culminating sequence, in which Romaldi enters, hotly pursued by soldiers, but is given shelter by Michelli, a Miller. Soon after, Francisco and Selina enter the valley; they eventually are confronted by Romaldi at gunpoint. But when the selfless Francisco opens his shirt and presents his breast to be shot, Romaldi cannot do it. «No! Too much of your blood is upon my head!» he says: «Be justly revenged: take mine!» [Holcroft 1802, p. 49], after which there follows a kind of stand-off. Michelli, meanwhile, has run to find the soldiers, who now return and present the audience with a second, even more deadly, standoff: Romaldi with a sword, maintaining a retreating defence, and the advancing archers, determined to dispatch him. At this point, the rest of the cast arrives. Selina and Francisco throw themselves between the Archers and Romaldi to save him. Bonarmo intervenes, and his speech closes the play: «We all entreat for mercy; since of mercy we all have need: for his sake, and for our own, may it be freely granted!» [Holcroft 1802, p. 51]. With this the curtain falls.

Here is a play that conducts itself like a melodrama, but that does not resolve like one – or at least not in the ways we associate with the form in its later years of popularity. As if in sympathy with Peace that enabled its migration and production, it ends with a plea for no further violence, and for justice to be administered in some more reflective, less lethal way. Looking to the

other melodramas imported from Paris to London over the next five years, we find most of them equally strange and ambivalent in the situations and politics. There is Matthew Lewis's *Rugantino* (Covent Garden, 18 October 1805), adapted from Pixérécourt's *L'homme à trois visages*, featuring a hero-villain capable of moving between identities. Rugantino is at once beautiful and scarred, lover and assassin, Prince of Milan and a leader of banditti. He adapts these secret identities, moreover, not to combat threats from without, but rather those from within. Infiltrating a band of ruffians wishing to eliminate Venice's rulers, he stages several fake assassinations in order first to confuse, and then to expose, the conspirators behind the plot. As with *A Tale of Mystery*, the play tests whether existing power structures, be they familial or governmental, have the strength and integrity to withstand internal threats, whether those of corruption or of sedition. We might continue this theme via another play of Holcroft's, *The Fortress* (Haymarket, 16 July 1807), also adapted from Pixérécourt. This melodrama focuses on the plight of Lord Everard, who is imprisoned in a fortress and waiting for his daughter Celestine and his adopted son Oliver to free him. Or, we might consider still another Pixérécourt import from this same season, *Tekeli; or the Siege of Montgatz* (Drury Lane, 24 November 1806), also focusing on a figure trapped in a fortress – but in this case it is Count Tekeli's wife, hoping to withstand an imperial siege. As with *The Fortress*, the business of *Tekeli* focuses on sneaking past the forces guarding the Castle walls. Unlike the other imported melodramas, however, the play takes war and imperial aggression as a given – perhaps because it is the first of the boulevard melodramas from Pixérécourt composed after the Peace of Amiens was broken in the summer of 1803. With war resumed, we see a shift with *Tekeli*'s in Pixérécourt's politics – one anticipating those early melodramas composed on English soil.

These homegrown melodramas from English authors are remarkably different from their imported French counterparts, invoking different conventions and a more warlike politics. Among the earliest of these, Thomas John Dibdin's *Valentine and Orson* (Covent Garden, 2 April 1804), more closely resembles an English pantomime than a melodrama in the European tradition. It opens seemingly where *A Tale of Mystery* ended: with a ceremony to celebrate war's end and the beginnings of peace. Valentine is welcomed home as a war hero, victorious over the Saracens; but even in this moment of celebration, threats still exist from without, in the form of the Green Knight and the Giant Ferragus. *Valentine and Orson* thus opens between wars, but the peace is a false one: one in which its characters must go again to war to finish the job.

Similar politics apply to Dibdin's next production, *Harlequin Quicksilver; or The Devil and the Gnome* (Covent Garden, 26 December 1804), which repeatedly attacks France as an instrument of evil. Focusing on a troupe of enslaved miners, the play centres on the attempts of Julia to free her lover Albert.

As with *Valentine and Orson*, magical thinking is required. To bring about the desired liberation and happy ending, the Queen of the Gnomes commissions Harlequin Quicksilver to assist Julia and Albert – and in spite of Albert's fellow miners betraying him, Quicksilver helps to effect their escape to Spain. Up until this point, the play follows the conventions of any harlequinade. But then – sporting an outrageous French accent – up jumps the Devil Asmodeus. Disguised as a «wand'ring savoyard», he sings the following song:

> Oh, pretty show! Oh, raree show! who see my fine
> show
> There you see the fine Dutch Citoyen avec de grand
> grimace
> Receive from de Citoyen françois de *imperial* embrace
> And here be de Frenchman so kind to his Dutch
> brother,
> He squeeze him wid on hand, & pick his pocket wid de
> oder.
> Oh, pretty show – oh! raree shew.
>
> And here be de French Voluntier vid de glorious
> ambition
> He run away for fear to sear in de grand Requisition
> For liberty in France is kept in such fine preservation
> Dere is not von little bit of it to be had all over de Nation.
> Oh, pretty show, & c.
>
> And here be de English jack a de Tars never quitting Gun
> Till de ship it be sunk, or de battle be won;
> And den, foolish men, dey plunge into de wave,
> To rescue a foe from de Watery Grave
> And after dat dey get drunk wid de grog, as you see
> Wid drinking de health of de Kind and de Country
> Wid vat you call three Times three
> [Dibdin 1804, pp. 26-27].

After some more pantomime business, the French Asmodeus retreats, but makes the following closing speech:

> Your Game is started, I must now away,
> Where all my fellows meet in congregation
> In honor of a dev'lish joyful day.
> At Paris, 'tis our best friend's coronation
> [Dibdin 1804, p. 28].

With Asmodeus departed to attend Napoleon's coronation as Emperor, the Queen of Gnomes closes the pantomime, proclaiming:

> Let fall that weak opponent of my pow'r
> Release those Victims of unlawful Ire;
> Let happiness henceforward rule the Hour
> While Care and Avarice fare hence retire.
> You to the brilliant sphere that gave you birth
> You to the joys that wait on wedded love
> You, if content, may join the scene of mirth
> Where all are blest, if you, our friends, approve
> [Dibdin 1804, p. 28].

Historians of English melodrama often speak of *A Tale of Mystery* as a first. Less often, though, do we consider what came immediately after, particularly in those first formative years when a series of home-grown English productions, sporting radically different conventions and visions from those imported from the Continent, took the stage in the costume of 'melodrama'.

Play	Theatre	Premiere
A Tale of Mystery	Covent Garden	13 Nov 1802
The Wife of Two Husbands	Drury Lane	29 Nov 1803
Valentine and Orson	Covent Garden	2 Apr 1804
Harlequin Quicksilver; or, The Gnome and the Devil	Covent Garden	12 Dec 1804
The Prince	Sadler's Wells	1805 [?]
Rugantino; or, The Bravo of Venice	Covent Garden	11 Oct 1805
An Occasional Attempt to Commemorate…Lord Viscount Nelson	Drury Lane	11 Nov 1805
The Sleeping Beauty	Covent Garden	6 Dec 1805
Augustus and Gulielmus; or, The Villagers	Haymarket	March 1806
The Cloud King; Or, Magic Rose	New Royal Circus	30 June 1806
The False Friend; or, Assassins of the Rocks	New Royal Circus	7 Sept 1806
Tekeli; or, The Siege of Montgaz	Drury Lane	24 Nov 1806
Alberto and Lauretta; or, The Orphan of the Alps	Haymarket	15 Dec 1806
The Wood Daemon; or, The Clock Has Struck	Drury Lane	1 Apr 1807
The Fortress	Haymarket	16 July 1807

Table 1: The First Fifteen English Melodramas

Thus, in the first years of melodrama's existence on the English stage, a chasm begins to open between melodramas imported from Europe and those

created at home. Looking from *A Tale of Mystery*, *Rugantino, and Tekeli* to *Valentine and Orson, Harlequin Quicksilver* – and even the most strange early melodrama of them all, *An Occasional Attempt to Commemorate the Death and Victory of Lord Viscount Nelson* (Drury Lane, 11 November 1805), we find an emerging genre strangely blurred in its conventions and politics. It's almost as if the ambivalent theatrical cutting that Holcroft sought to transplant on English soil, in spite of its initial success during the temporary peace, could not continue as such once war had recommenced. With the theatres of war reopened, English playwrights and producers wrestled over the next years with the problem of how to naturalize melodrama to English soil. Looking to the range of plays that they produced, what is most notable about these early wartime melodramas is their sheer diversity and disparity from one another: a tradition verging on incoherence – in part caused by longstanding legal constraints shaping the theatrical scene, but now placed under even greater stress by the ideological pressures of war.

Bibliography

Conolly, L. W. (1976): *The Censorship of English Drama, 1737-1824*, San Marino, Huntington Library.

Cox, J. N. (2014): *Romanticism and the Shadow of War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

— (1999): «Spots of Time: The Structure of the Dramatic Evening in the Theatre of Romanticism», *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 41, pp. 403-425.

Dibdin, T. J. (n.d.): *Harlequin Quicksilver; or, The Devil and the Grome*, Huntington Library MS LA1430.

Holcroft, T. (1802): *A Tale of Mystery, A Melo-Drame*, London, Phillips.

[Hunt], J. H. L. (1949): «[On Pantomime]», *The Examiner* (5 January 1817 and 26 January 1817), in L. H. Houtchens and C. Washburn Houtchens, eds, *Leigh Hunt's Dramatic Criticism 1808-1831*, New York, Columbia University Press, pp. 140-145.

Macmillan, D. (1939): *Catalogue of the Larpent Plays in the Huntington Library,* San Marino: Huntington Library.

Moody, J. (2000): *Illegitimate Theatre in London 1770-1840*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

— (1996): «'Fine Word, Legitimate!': Toward a Theatrical History of Romanticism», *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 38.

O'Shaughnessy, D. ed. (2023): *The Censorship of Eighteenth-Century Theatre*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Stephens, J. R. (1980): *The Censorship of English Drama, 1824-1901*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Thomas, D. (1969): *A Long Time Burning: The History of Literary Censorship in England*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Spiritual Warfare, Radicalism and Gender in Joanna Southcott's *A Dispute between the Woman and the Powers of Darkness* (1802)

Abstract

This paper is centred on the prophetess Joanna Southcott (1750-1814) and her iconic *A Dispute between the Woman and the Powers of Darkness*. Published in 1802 and incorporating clear elements of religious, spiritual, as well as gender conflict, this short hybrid prose mirrors the tensions and anxieties of an entire generation of men and women. Building upon the latest research on her figure and on Millenarian movements (Brown 2002; Bar-Yoseph 2004; Hopkins 2014; Shaw and Lockley 2017; Crome 2019) in early nineteenth-century England, and also including an overview of her rich production, this paper will thus begin discussing Southcott's position as an Anglican and her interpretation of the concept of religious orthodoxy. *A Dispute between the Woman and the Powers of Darkness* will show that Eve's strong opposition against Satan expresses Southcott's determination to empower women and give them more space in the public sphere. Textual references to Southcott's more mature production and other unpublished materials will be made especially in the concluding section. In particular, *The Prophecies of Joanna Southcott, of Dreadful Judgements that are to Fall on this Nation in the Year 1810* (1810) will clarify that her religious and social commitment represented a response to the turmoil of late modern times.

Manuela D'Amore

> It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way. […] It was the year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five. Spiritual revelations were conceded to England at that favoured period, as at this. Mrs. Southcott had recently attained her five-and-twentieth blessed birthday, of whom a prophetic private in the Life Guards had heralded the sublime appearance by announcing that arrangements were made for the swallowing up of London and Westminster [Dickens 1999, p. 3].

1. Introduction

Symbolically recalling the «Season of Light» and the «Season of Darkness», the narrative voice of *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) proposes «Mrs. Southcott» as an iconic figure of the mid-1770s. Born in Devon in 1750 – and a domestic servant who began to receive visions in 1792 – she arrived in London in 1802 and soon became a famous preacher with thousands of devotees [Southcott 1814, pp. 3-4].[1] Considering that mentions of her controversial figure and her prophecies could be found in the literary production of the major Romantic authors – Blake [Connolly 2002, p. 175], Byron [Matar 1993, p. 237], Keats, Southey [Speck 2006, p. 199] and Macaulay [Thomas 2021, p. 199] – Dickens had no doubts that Victorian England still remembered her.

Indeed, although these major authors wrote «disparagingly» about her and her numerous devotees [Siegler 2010, p. 406], it is undeniable that she had a great success also in the print industry. In the period 1801-1814, for instance, a total of 108,000 copies of her works were circulated, which made her «one of the best-selling authors of the time» [Jensen-Rix 2015, p. 67]. As concerns the world of art, on the one hand, she was portrayed by a famed painter like William Sharp (1749-1829) [Hopkins 1982, pp. 159-169], while on the other hand, she was the object of a considerable amount of satire because of her late pregnancy [Juster 2010, p. 253]. It was 1814 when she announced that she would give birth to a new Messiah, the Shiloh foretold in the book of Genesis. Despite being a 64-year-old virgin, at least 20 doctors in London confirmed her condition, but Shiloh didn't appear and she died soon after [Coates 2019].

There is a growing interest in her 65 published works, as well as in the sealed wooden casket of prophecies known as the «Great Southcott Box» [Brown 2003][2] – or «the Spiritual Ark» [Kollar 1998, p. 96][3] – as well as in

[1] It was however in the opening page of *The Strange Effects of Faith; with Remarkable Prophecies (Made in 1792) of Things Which Are to Come*, London, 1801, that she wrote: «I shall omit former particulars, and begin with informing the Reader, that, in 1792, I was strangely visited, by day and night, concerning what was coming upon the whole earth. I was then ordered to set it down in writing. I obeyed, though not without strong external opposition; and so it has continued to the present time».

[2] See also R. Hann, *The Prophecies of Joanna Southcott*…, London, Walker, n.d., p. 13: «On the 2nd day of May 1803, Joanna was ordered to seal up all her writings again with proper witnesses; and to place them in the hands of a friend, till they were demanded by the great, learned and powerful, which is told her will be next year; when her's and our awful trial will come on».

[3] As Rene Kollar contends on p. 96, the box was also called «The Ark Covenant» because Southcott's followers believed «it held the "Testimony as did the first Ark of sacred history for the Children of Israel"».

the social phenomenon that she gave rise to. The latest scholarly research has demonstrated that her acolytes were generally victims of industrialism who ranked beside the «the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper» and others whose lives were lived in the face of «acute social disturbance» [Lockley 2013, p. 58]. Unsurprisingly, between 1815 and 1835, some of them radicalised their positions, thus drawing several hundred members of the movement into engagement with politics. The numerous mass-meetings and large demonstrations for reforms in 1816-1817 – also at the time of the Peterloo Massacre in 1819 – provide evidence that the prophetess's predictions were true. In the following years, in the 1820s and especially 1830s, they became more directly involved in post-war radicalism in London, particularly with the Society of Spencean Philanthropists [Steer 1913, p. 69].

The movement did not die out: in 1844, one Lady Ann Essam left large sums of money for «printing, publishing and propagation of the sacred writings of Joanna Southcott» [Steer 1913, p. 69]. Founded by Mabel Barltrop (1866-1934) in Bedford in 1919, The Panacea Society [Lockhart 2015, pp. 155-178] not only followed the teachings of the religious visionary, but also aimed at convincing the 24 Anglican bishops who were in charge at the time to open her sealed box of prophecies. Although in 1927 the box was found to contain «a few books and papers, dice, a lottery ticket, a night cap, earrings, a purse and an old horse-pistol – which proves that there was no sign of the prophecies that would save England» [Coates 2019][4] – the society was dissolved only in 2012, but its headquarters remained at the Panacea Museum. Its website[5] represents a rich resource for scholars as it gives access to scanned documents and materials which belonged to Southcott and her followers, and which show how vast and complex her creative universe was.

Indeed, she began as a writer with the editorial success of *The Strange Effects of Faith* in 1801. Published the following year and rich in gender and political implications [Siegler 2010, Sanders 2021], *A Dispute between the Woman and the Powers of Darkness* represents a turning point not only in the construction of her canon, but also of her system of thought: it was significantly after the failure of the Peace of Amiens (1802), in fact, that she increasingly radicalised her position as a medium of God, also expressing clear anti-Napoleonic views. Her theory of «just war» should be considered in line «with mainstream English reaction against the French» [Binfield 2001, p. 137].

[4] As Coates contends, the box was x-rayed and then opened in the presence of the Bishop of Grantham.

[5] The Joanna Southcott Collection can be found at https://panaceatrust.org/archives/the-joanna-southcott-collection (last accessed 6/11/2024).

Following a textual and an intertextual approach, and building on the most relevant studies on Southcott, this paper will thus begin from her fight against orthodoxy – and her new views on war – and then will focus on the core sections of the 1802 *Dispute*.[6] They are characterised by a very particular structure and a hybrid language; furthermore, they highlight the numerous connections not only with her past and future production, but also with the long tradition of English proto-feminist writings. The concluding section will confirm that her visions also closely referred to the conflicts of the time, and that they finally conveyed positive messages of peace and hope to an entire generation of men and women.

2. Towards Radicalism: Southcott on Religious Orthodoxy, Nationalism and Gender

> This is a New thing Among mankind, for a woman to be the Greatest Prophet that ever came into the World, to bring man out of darkness, into my Marvellous light, and make every Crooked path straight before You, and bring every mountain to a plain, and all dark Sayings shall be brought to light [Hopkins 1982, p. 10].[7]

Dating 3rd June 1802, Southcott's statement is clear on her position regarding religious orthodoxy. She had joined Methodism in 1791, and yet, thanks to the support of Reverend Joseph Pomeroy (1749-1837), she soon turned to the Anglican Church [Robins 1992, pp. 283-284]: even though prophecy was a vehicle that allowed women «to be heard, to challenge authority, and to stake a claim» [Bouldin 2015, p. 11], the ultra-conservatives continued to regard her as «an untutored female» who was «incapable of the conveyance of divine truth» [Wayne Jackman 2003, p. 74]. Deceived and disappointed, she predicted that England would suffer from bad harvest, that it would be defeated in the war with France, and that there would be some form of divine displeasure on the Anglican establishment. The opening passages of *The Strange Effects of Faith – First Part* (1801) clarify the tight connections between religion, domestic policy and great international conflicts also in her visions:

> In 1792, my Sister told me, I was growing out of my senses. She said, "You said there will be a war. Who shall we go to war with? The French are

[6] We will generally refer to Southcott's seven days' dispute with Satan, thus to the events of the 6th-10th August 1802. However, there will also be close references to the rest of her work.

[7] The original source of this quote dates to 3rd June 1802 and is part of the Joanna Southcott Collection of the University of Texas.

> destroying themselves. As to the dearth of provision you speak of, you are wrong; for corn will come down very low; I could make 4s. 6d. a bushel of the best of the wheat this year. As to the distress of the nation, you are wrong there; for England was never in a more flourishing state than it is in at present." — I answered, "Well, if it be of God, it will come to pass, however likely or unlikely it may appear at present. If not, I shall hurt no one but myself by writing it. I am the fool, and must be the sufferer, if it be not of God. If it be of God, I would not refuse for the world, and I am determined to err on the safest side" [Southcott 1801b, p. 5].

The «remarkable things» that she foretold actually «happened» the following year [Southcott 1801b, p. 6], which caused a dramatic increase in the number of her followers. There is documentary evidence, in fact, that they systematically «united to hear sermons together, sing hymns on the coming millennium, and especially to pray God to protect them from Satan» [Lockley 2013, p. 4]. Although the prophetess never proposed a radical reform of the social system, and «combined Christianity and nationalism in eulogies for England» [Bifield 2001, p. 140],[8] she was unjustly seen as a female «Thomas Paine» [Wayne Jackman 2003, p. 77].

Evidence of «the sorrow» that she felt and «the persecutions that [she] met with from an ungrateful, ill-natured, and sinful world» can be found in her personal correspondence since 1804 [Hopkins 1982, p. 29].[9] It was, however, in 1811 that she launched a harsh attack precisely against Thomas Paine in her *Answer* to his *Third Party of the Age of Reason* [Niblett 2015, pp. 92-94]. Despising his determination to «mock» «the Scriptures» and considering his «doctrines» «pernicious», she proudly quoted from «St. Paul»: «That in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, which is the influence of the devil» [Southcott 1812a, pp. 2-3].

Yet, her defence of religious orthodoxy and of social order represents only a part of her complex system of convictions. Indeed, she consistently demonstrated a clear vision of her personal and political role as a prophetess. For instance, she argued that «freedom from invasion was not unconditionally

[8] See Anonymous [Joanna Southcott], *An Account of the Trials on Bills of Exchange Wherein the Deceit of Mr. John and His Confederates*, London, 1807, p. 54. Here Southcott refers to a communication that she received "on March the 27 1803": "So now, O England, thou enlightened land, / That hath been guarded by the Gospel's pole, / You may rejoice and sing, while others fall; / Because the trumpet you'll hear first for war; / That foreign nations they will fast appear, / I say, for battle; you will hear the sound; / A dreadful war will in all lands abound, / While you may stand within the Gospel's pole: / And let this music now awaken all."

[9] Here we can find textual reference to Southcott's letter to Jane Townley dating 11th June 1804.

granted to England» [Bifield 2001, p. 142] and that Britons had to «turn to [God]» and repent to avoid the risk of famine [Southcott 1801a, p. 12]. At a time when she treated the French Revolution as a call for spiritual renewal – and was also critical about the Peace of Amiens – she began reading sermons such as *War Not Inconsistent with Christianity; a Discourse* (1804), which prompted her to view France as a significant threat and develop a theory of just war. Evidence of her conviction that England had the right to self-defence – and that any war against France should be «conducted under the authority of a Christian ruler» [Bifield 2001, p. 148; Rix 2016, p. 35] – can be found in her *Account of the Trials on Bills of Exchange* (1807) and in *The Temporal and Spiritual Sword* (1853).

Time passed by and she focused more specifically on gender and female agency. By linking nationalism to religion, for instance, she asserted her leading role in the cosmic struggle between Good and Evil, emphasising that her most significant mission was to absolve Eve from being solely seen as the agent of the Fall. She thus peppered her works with «images of male villainy and female defiance» [Shoemaker 2014, p. 219] while claiming that «Satan all the blame must bear» and that the «promise was given to the woman, her seed should bruise his head» [Southcott 1801b, p. 232].

She reported Christ's defence of women as they had followed him on the Cross in *The Answer of the Lord to the Powers of Darkness* in 1813. According to Jane Shaw, pronouncements such as «It was by a Woman I came into the World in the form of a Man; and now by a Woman I will reveal myself unto men» [Southcott 1815, p. 105] were instrumental in reinforcing her role as a medium of God [Shaw 2018]. Indeed, following in Esther's and Judith's footsteps [D'Amore 2012, p. 101], she finally addressed several important questions to her followers. The majority of them were women, 63% vs 37% of men: although Philip Lockley has recently depicted a larger and definitely more balanced picture of her movement also at a social level [Lockley 2009, pp. 36-75], it seems undeniable that her position as a proto-feminist woman of faith mostly lies in her biblical interpretations and the claims that she made for herself. The questions she posed about women's capacity to «deliver her people» can also be found in *A Warning to the World. Joanna Southcott's Prophecies* (1804), which continued to be reprinted until the early 1810s:

> Is it a new thing for a Woman to deliver her people? Did not Esther do it? Did not Judith do it? and was it not a Woman that nailed Sisera to the ground? But by whose powers do you judge it was done? Was it by MY POWER making the Woman an instrument in MY hand? Or was it in the Women's power to do it of themselves? Men must own these wondrous works were never done by Women without my strength and protection. Then why do ye marvel if I give this Woman to nail Satan to the ground by MY POWER, to cut off his head [Southcott 1813, p. 52].

3. *Fighting for Recognition and Power: The 1802 Dispute*

It would take several decades to reinterpret – and even go beyond – the significance of Southcott's complex message. After her death, in an effort to put the woman at the heart of a new salvation scheme, Mabel Baltrop, the founder of The Panacea Society, changed the paradigm even more deeply, thus creating «a foursquare», which was represented by God the Father, the Holy Spirit, Jesus the Son and Mabel the Daughter, or Octavia as she preferred to call herself [Shaw 2018, p. 57]. Although she had significantly moved away from Southcott's original convictions, she continued to consider also her early works and rich body of letters as important sources of inspiration.

One of them was certainly *A Dispute between the Woman and the Powers of Darkness*. It follows *The Strange Effect of Faith and Divine and Spiritual Letters of Prophecy*, and it is the product of her mystical visions and «Communications from the Spirit» [Hopkins 1982, p. 33].[10] Divided into three parts, it curiously begins with the events of 3rd–10th August; it continues with Southcott's first encounter with Satan on 26th July, and it finally proposes the message that the Holy Spirit conveyed on 20th–30th August.

Trying to unite human reason and faith in religious mysteries, Southcott immediately clarifies that the lack of temporal coherence in her writing is due to God's commands. This may represent a limitation to her freedom as a writer, but at a time when she has just engaged in a new battle against the «Powers of Darkness», she cannot but recognise the fact that «He», God, is all her strength:

> I *was ordered* to pen his words, whatever blasphemy he might speak against the Lord, and the justice of his sentence; for the Lord said I should not *do* as I did in 1792, refuse to write his blasphemy, out of a wrong zeal for religion; because I thought his words were too shocking to pen: but now I was *commanded* to banish these fears; because it would make religion become sinful. Therefore I was *ordered* to pen every word *perfect* which he uttered [Southcott 1995, p. 1].

Her choice to put an emphasis on the «orders» that she received from the Lord represents more than a rhetoric strategy. In *The Strange Effects of Faith*, for instance, her prophecies were seriously called into question by «Rev. Mr. L.», prompting a fierce reaction from her [Southcott 1801b, p. 6]: in the hope to be trusted by her readers, she thus decided to commence from her role as a direct medium of God and to confirm that she «pen[ned] every word *perfect*

[10] Hopkins discusses Southcott's definition of herself as a «Woman of Revelation» like Elpeth (Luckie) Buchnan (1738-1791) in Scotland and Jemima Wilkinson (1752-1819) in America.

which he uttered». Her principal aim, in fact, was to truthfully recount what «happened between the woman and the Serpent»: «the Devil overcame the woman by dispute at first – but then the promise that was made her at first, was fulfilled at last», «viz.» she «bruized his head, as her Lord's heel» [Southcott 1995, p. 65].

A multi-layered text which also contains lengthy inserts of prophetic verse, *A Dispute between the Woman and the Powers of Darkness* does not only offer a new representation of the eternal opposition between Good and Evil. It is written in the form of a dialogue and it expresses the social fears and political anxieties of an entire generation of men and women. Although the principal level of interpretation is spiritual – and «Joanna» firmly believes that at the end «the woman» will «be *freed*» and Satan will «*fall*» [Southcott 1995, p. 2] – yet, the dispute soon acquires clear political connotations. On the first day, for instance, she begins her strong defence of God as a source of light, peace and joy [Southcott 1995, pp. 7, 39], also explaining why Satan was «cast out of Heaven» [Southcott 1995, p. 6]. An enemy and a «tyrant» who wanted to «overthrow the power of the Most High God», he has failed. The following extract is taken from the second day's dispute:

> *Joanna*. Thou wantest to overthrow the power of the Most High God: and is He not just to chain thee down, O Satan? Thy own words condemn thee in every word thou hast spoken. And was not the Lord just to cast such a tyrant out of Heaven? Who now boastest of thy hellish power to *compel*, where thou canst not tempt? Should the Lord give up thy malicious power, He must give up being a king upon His Throne, and give up man, that He hath made, to the malicious power of the Devil, and ruin the works of His Own Hands, and make a creation He cannot command [Southcott 1995, pp. 27-28].

God is thus the King who did not want to «give up His Throne» [Southcott 1995, p. 76], but Satan, a Miltonian anti-hero who rejects any form of authority, reminds «Joanna» that he has always «pleased» mankind, and that he has kept both his strength and popularity. Starting from the conviction that he has «thousands of friends, where the Lord would have one», he affirms that he is «ready to be judged by the world» [Southcott 1995, p. 35]. If there were an election, in fact, he would win and keep his kingdom.[11]

Although in Romantic times the Devil was perceived as a symbol of rebellion against religious oppression and obscurantism [Sanders 2021, p. 8, Sales 2023], *A Dispute between the Woman and the Powers of Darkness* cannot be

[11] See the text on p. 36: «I am very ready to be choosed by votes[.] […] If I cannot get most votes, I will willingly lose my election, and be no Member of Parliament at all. But I know, if justice is done me that way, I shall stand, and keep the kingdom, as I have kept it already. For I know I have ten to one with the Lord».

considered as an anticipation of the idea of «Satanic feminism» which developed in the following years [Faxneld 2017]. Fighting against control and subjugation, Southcott cannot even think of the Devil as a «hero» or a «liberator» [Faxneld 2017, p. 2], and clearly utilises her dispute to affirm her dignity as a woman and her role as «the Chosen One» [Faxneld 2017, p. 103].

Indeed, Satan is depicted as a dangerous male antagonist. His negative traits are immediately clear: he is a liar, a manipulator and a seducer, but worst of all, his violent language recalls the long literary tradition of misogynist writings. Interestingly, he seems to fight on two fronts: that of God's political authority, which he wants to discard, and that of women's empowerment. At this particular level, apart from uttering epithets like «thou infamous bitch» and «thou wheening devil» – or phrases like «stop thy damned eternal tongue» [Southcott 1995, pp. 23, 31] – he immediately urges «Joanna» «to renounce» and «burn» «all [her] writings» and «sealed books» [Southcott 1995, p. 9]. Determined to serve her Lord only, «Joanna» confirms that she will never «destroy» them «unless [He]», the Lord, «convinces [her] that they are not of God and, and supports no more truths to fulfil them» [Southcott 1995, p. 10]. She feels safe, though, as she knows «in whom she trusts, and who is the strong man armed»:

> *Satan*. If I am a Devil, then now I will be a Devil; and that thou shalt find before the morning. I did not tear thee in pieces last night: I thought thy dream would have frightened thee into compliance: but as it hath not, thou shalt groan *for something* this night. And mind, in Exeter I had power to come to thee; but hast no one in the inner room now. So thou art in my power, unless thou dost not answer me again before the morning. Then I will not trouble thee this night. But if thou answerest one word, or put thy name, I will tear thee to pieces; for the Lord shall not prevent me.
>
> *Joanna*. Then I shall know in whom I trust, and who is the strong man armed. The Lord hath promised to protect me, if I rely on Him. But if I give out because of Satan's threatenings, then I give up my faith in Christ, and fear the power of the Devil [Southcott 1995, p. 22].

Time passes by and the level of tension reaches its peak. Desirous to punish Joanna for considering him «an inferior power», Satan threatens her that he will «dash» her «head against the ceiling» and «destroy» her [Southcott 1995, p. 27]. In his opinion, «a woman's tongue no man can tame» [Southcott 1995, p. 32]: at a moment when their ideas of truth, power and domination – especially relating to the complex relationships between God, «Joanna» and the Serpent [Southcott 1995, pp. 8-9] – are totally

irreconcilable,[12] he simply cannot accept that she «shall have the last word of her master» [Southcott 1995, p. 52] and especially that she will always follow her Lord.

A victim of sexist slurs and continuous physical threats, «Joanna» not only resists, but also counterattacks. On the fourth day's dispute, for instance, she defines Satan as «a weak ignorant creature» who should «repent of his folly»: «the whole world will be at war against [him]» and he will also «lose [his] election» [Southcott 1995, p. 33]. Although the level of opposition between them seems mostly intellectual, especially during the last three days, «Joanna» radicalises her position, thus detaching herself completely from religious orthodoxy. The reader will gradually perceive her as a new Christological figure who rejects all temptations[13] and finally wins the war against the «Powers of Darkness». It will be in this way that she will also rewrite the pact between Man and God.

Once again, she reprises her discourse on the Creation. She continues to refuse Satan's «knowledge», but is clear on the fact that if Eve had really known him, she would have certainly ignored his «lies» [Southcott 1995, p. 55]. From this point of view, she is very different from «the mother of all living» (*Gen*. 3: 20) as she could never «trust» him [Southcott 1995, p. 55]. Acquiring a stronger sense of awareness of her powers and potential, at the end of the sixth day's dispute, she sounds as violent as her enemy:

> I hate and despise all thy arts, words and ways. Is this the way thou drawest in the simple and unwary into misery? I was ordered to write what thou hast

[12] We consider that Satan's Friend's speech is particularly interesting also from the point of view of gender. His parable relates to Southcott's negative vision of marriage in patriarchal England, which will be at the core of other passages of *A Dispute*. See p. 9: «Now, to pacify that anger, and throw open the veil, I will tell thee the truth from a parable. Thou art like the woman, that married in a mask, both she and her husband; but when the mask was taken off, she found her mistake; and was forced to live with her husband, though she did not love him: and so it is with thee. For thou wilt soon find thou art foiled like her. Now if thou freely consentest to renounce all thy writings, and burn all thy writings and sealed books, and confess to the world thou hast found out the deceit. Satan has promised to forgive thee, and will be thy friend, and soon find a way to clear thy character, and make thy name shine. For all men will praise thy wisdom and prudence, to own the truth when thou knowest it and as thou lovest writing, I will make thee the first writer in the world; and where thou hast one friend, I will gain thee one thousand».

[13] Once again, see the text on p. 59: «Was not God as bad as the Devil, and worse, when He knowed, as thou sayest, what a wretch betrayed them? God ought not to cast them out of the Garden of Eden; for I now would not be angry with thee, if tough gavest up thy hand to me; I would love thee above all women in the world, and make thee the queen of all my palace: which is a very fine one, and thou should reign as the brightest woman that ever was born».

> to say for thyself, of the justness of thy sentence; and now the Lord will give it up to thy proposals, to be tried by elections, as a man is tried – and see if thou gainest any votes. But I believe thou wilt gain none. Thou hast discovered too many arts to gain any credit. But silly Satan, how couldest thou presume to flatter me, to leave my God and Saviour to worship thee? Oh, thou hardened wretch! Such ways must bring down divine vengeance on thy head [Southcott 1995, p. 60].

«The Chosen One of the Lord», as she proclaimed herself [Southcott 1995, p. 103], Southcott concludes her *Dispute* with the perspective of a new Creation, especially of a «second Adam» and a new and perfect Eve. Evidence of her desire to modernise and change the Biblical tradition could already be found in her *Letter to the Reverend Archdeacon Moore, 19th June 1798*, where she affirms that «[i]f Paradise was lost by the woman's disobedience, it must be regained by her perfect obedience» [Southcott 1813, p. 19]. In a context where the concepts of respect and obedience seem to be paradoxically instrumental in the construction of an avant-garde system of thought, the following lines – taken, once again, from *A Dispute* – gave hope to Southcott's contemporaries:

> The day of vengeance now is nigh, / That I had in my heart that day; / And now I ask on whom 't shall fall? / The *unknown* hand foretels you all, / That he for Satan does appear; / And in the woman I AM here, / In mercy to redeem the man / From all the powers of Satan's hand […].
>
> Can Adam now appear, / Without his Eve, do you believe? / Now, see the myst'ries clear. Now I must come in Adam's form, / For CREATE all new: / And from ME must the woman come, / The good Fruit for to shew: / And She must end, as Eve begun, / The strong dispute with Hell: / If Satan first did conquer there, / And man with her did fall; / Then now see plain, ye sons of men, / The woman's conquer'th here: / An by her stand, is My command: / The TREE OF LIFE is near [Southcott 1995, p. 107].

4. Aftermath: Joanna's Final Promise of Victory and Peace

Southcott continued to reinterpret the Fall – and re-discuss the role of woman in the Scriptures – in the following years, particularly in *Sound an Alarm in My Holy Mountain* (1804) and in *Scriptures Which Shew for What Christ Died* (1812). It was indeed after the success of *A Dispute* that she defined herself as the woman «clothed in the Sun» [Southcott 1804, p. 63], and that she confirmed that «the promise was made for man's redemption (*Gen*. III. 5) when the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head» [Southcott 1812b, p. 8].

The fruit of her visions and prophecies, her writings continued to fuel her followers' interest and admiration for many years after her death.

In the 1830s, for instance, one of her followers and an Owenite, James Elishama (Shepherd) Smith (1801-1857), founded the journal entitled *The Shepherd* (1834-1838), in which he reinforced the link between the Cristian faith and politics. It was on 18th October 1834, in the article entitled «System of Nature», that he contended that «with Jesus Christ began the reign of metaphysics and intellectual warfare, which has sharpened the wits of Europeans, and given them a superiority over all nations of the world» [Smith 1834, p. 59]. Religion thus continued to be associated to the concept of opposition and warfare, even though there remained great hope for the perspective figure of a female Messiah who would inaugurate a new era. According to Philip Lockley, especially Southcott's vision of «God's creativity» and agency was crucial in the elaboration of Smith's socialist ideals [Lockley 2013, p. 232].

This is to say that Southcott's followers never lost faith in her creed, and that they also adapted it to the new political and philosophical challenges of their time. From this point of view, the materials which they wrote after her death in 1814 not only deepen the political significance of her production, but also bear witness to the lively debate on her «Divine Mission». Dense pamphlets and collections of letters, they clearly show that in the wider context of Southcottian writings, *A Dispute between the Woman and the Powers of Darkness* is still very important: it recounts a special episode of her tireless fight against evil, but more importantly, it voices the contrasts between the sexes in the early 19th century. Despite the fact that Southcott was often ridiculed by her contemporaries, her intention to make those contrasts explicit[14] – and her commitment as a proto-feminist woman of faith – were greatly valued in the following decades.

Disillusioned and hurt by the scepticism of many, particularly in the Church of England and in the most exclusive intellectual circles, she conveyed messages of hope until the end of her life. It was in 1810 – when the Bishop of London R. Hann collected and published *The Prophecies of Joanna Southcott* – that she foresaw the end of all conflicts in England, and especially the defeat of Napoleon, «whom she still believed to be the Antichrist» of the Scriptures (Hann 1810a, 1810b, p. 18, Rix 2016, p. 35). After engaging in so many political, religious and gender battles, she finally prophetised peace and prosperity:

> The awful judgements are to take place next year, 1810, viz. The sword, pestilence, and famine to go through the land. The year after, the troubles

[14] See especially Joanna Southcott, *A Dispute...*, p. 72: «Satan. O, thou bitch of Hell! Call me no more the woman's friend; I hate the sex. / Joanna. And I hate thee, Satan, and thine».

are to subside; the devil is to be banished from the land; and of course, sin and sorrow will cease, and England will be a happy land. […] Bonaparte is to land in England, and to be put to death by the sealed people [Hann 1810a, pp. 22-23].

Bibliography

Anonymous [Joanna Southcott] (1807): *An Account of the Trials on Bills of Exchange Wherein the Deceit of Mr. John and His Confederates*, London.

Binfield, K. (2001): «The French, the "Long-wished-for Revolution," and the Just War in Joanna Southcott», in A. Craciun and K. E. Lokke, eds, *Rebellious Hearts: British Women Writers and the French Revolution*, New York, State University of New York Press, pp. 135-160.

Bouldin, E. (2015): *Women Prophets and Radical Protestantism in the British Atlantic World 1640-1730*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Brown, F. (2003): *Joanna Southcott's Box of Sealed Prophecies*, Cambridge, The Lutterworth Press.

Cazzola, M. (2021): *The Political Though of Thomas Spence: Beyond Poverty and Empire*, Routledge.

Coates, S. (2019): «Delving into the Mystery of Joanna Southcott's Box», in *Londonist*, 23 August. https://londonist.com/2016/10/in-search-of-joanna-southcott-s-box [last accessed 10/10/2024].

Connolly, T. (2002): *William Blake and the Body*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan.

D'Amore, M. (2012): «Beyond 'Modesty and Handsome Decorum': [Hannah Woolley's] *The Gentlewomans Companion* (1672-1673)», in M. D'Amore and M. Lardy, eds, *Essays in Defence of the Female Sex: Custom, Education and Authority in Seventeenth-Century England*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, pp. 97-114.

Dickens, C. (1999): *A Tale of Two Cities*, Ware, Wordsworth Editions, 1999.

Faxneld P. (2017): *Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Woman in Nineteenth Century Culture*, New York, Oxford Academic. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190664473.001.0001 [last accessed 4/10/2024].

Hann, R. (1810a): *The Prophecies of Joanna Southcott…*, London, Walker.

— (1810b): *The Remarkable Life, Entertaining History and Surprising Adventures of Joanna Southcott…* London.

Hopkins, J. K. (1982): *A Woman to Deliver Her People. Joanna Southcott and English Millenarianism in an Era of Revolution*, Austin, The University of Texas Press.

Jensen-Rix, R. W. (2015): «Joanna Southcott and the Strange Effects of Printing: Publishing Prophecies in the Early Nineteenth Century», in *History of Religions*, n. 1, vol. 55, pp. 65-88.

Juster, S. (2010): *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
Kollar, R. (1998): «Prophecy, Anglicanism, and the Great War: The Archbishop of Canterbury and Joanna Southcott's Sealed Box», in *Dutch Review of Church History*, n. 1, vol. 78, pp. 94-112.
Lockhart, A. (2015): «Religious and Spiritual Mobility in Britain: The Panacea Society and Other Movements in the Twentieth Century», in *Contemporary British History*, n. 2, vol. 29, pp. 155-178.
Lockley, P. (2009): *Millenarian Religion and Radical politics in Britain 1815-1835: A Study of Southcottians after Southcott*, Ph.D. Thesis, New College, University of Oxford, 2009.
— (2013): *Visionary Religion and Radicalism in Early Industrial England: From Southcott to Socialism*, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Matar, N. I. (1993): «The English Romantic Poets and the Jews», in *Jewish Social Studies*, n. 3-4, vol. 50, (Summer, 1988 - Autumn, 1993), pp. 233-238.
Niblett, M. (2015): *Prophecy and the Politics of Salvation in Late Georgian England: The Theology and Apocalyptic Vision of Joanna Southcott*, London, Bloomsbury, pp. 92-94.
Rix, R. (2016): *William Blake and the Cultures of Christianity*, Milton Park, Routledge.
Robins, R. (1992): «Anglican Prophetess Joanna Southcott and The Gospel Story», in *Anglican and Episcopal History*, n. 3, vol. 61, pp. 277-302.
Sales, R. (2023), *English Literature in History, 1780-1830: Pastoral and Politics*, London, Routledge. Ebook.
Sanders, M. (2021): «Introduction», in M. Sanders, ed., *Women and Radicalism in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. I, London, Routledge, pp. 3-14.
Shaw, J. (2018): «Joanna Southcott and Mabel Baltrop. Interpreting Genesis and Revelation», in Y. Sherwood, ed., *The Bible and Feminism: Interpreting Genesis and Revelation*, Oxford, Oxford Academic. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198722618.001.0001 [last accessed 16/10/2024].
Shoemaker, R. B. (2014): *Gender in English Society 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?*, New York and London.
Sigler, D. (2010): «Dead Faith and Contraband Goods: Joanna Southcott and the Logic of Sexuation», in *Studies in Romanticism*, n. 3, vol. 49, p. 405-425.
Smith J. E. (1834): «System of Nature», in *The Shepherd*, 18 October, pp. 58-63.
Southcott, J. (1801a): *Collected Tracts*, London.
— (1801b): *The Strange Effects of Faith; with Remarkable Prophecies (Made in 1792) of Things Which Are to Come*, London.
— (1804): *Sound an Alarm in My Holy Mountain*, Leeds.
— (1812a): *An Answer to Thomas Paine's Third Part of "The Age of Reason"*, London, Marchant and Galabin.
— (1812b), *Scriptures Which Shew for What Christ Died, also Which Show His Second Coming…*, London, Marchant and Galabin.

— (1813): «A Warning to the World. Joanna Southcott's Prophecies», in J. Southcott, *Copies of Letters Sent to the Clergy of Exeter from 1796 to 1800 with Communications and Prophecies Put in the Newspapers in 1813*, London, pp. 1-74.
— (1814): *The Life of Joanna Southcott, The Prophetess…*, London, Fairburn.
— (1815): *The Answer of the Lord to the Powers of Darkness*, Second Edition, London.
— (1995): *A Dispute between the Woman and the Powers of Darkness*, Poole, Woodstock Books.
Speck, W.A. (2006): *Robert Southey: Entire Man of Letters*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press.
Steer, M. (1913): «Joanna Southcott», in Devon & Cornwall Notes and Queries, vol. 7, 1912-1913, pp. 69-73.
Thomas, W., ed. (2021): *The Journals of Thomas B. Macaulay*, vol. 5, Milton Park, Taylor and Francis.
Wayne Jackman, S. (2003): *Deviating Voices: Women and Orthodox Religious Tradition*, Cambridge, Lutterworth Press.

«What does Keats have to teach me of rifle and machine-gun drill?»: Wilfred Owen and the Romantics

Abstract

The article intends to analyse the complex and multifaceted relationship that the war poet Wilfred Owen established with the life and works of the Romantics, mainly P. B. Shelley and John Keats. Owen's letters and his early poetic production testify to his idolatry for the two poets. This essay will try to demonstrate how the «pity of war» and the need to denounce the horrors of modern warfare in his later production never really resulted in a rejection of the Romantic legacy. In contrast with critical readings that understand Owen's mature war poetry as a renunciation to his early Romantic ideals, the article shows how, even in later texts such as *Strange Meeting*, through an intricate web of intertextual references the poet pursues an uninterrupted dialogue with the great Romantics.

Carlotta Farese

On 2 December 1914, in a letter to his mother Susan, Wilfred Owen wrote: «Do you know what would hold me together on a battlefield?: The sense that I was perpetuating the language in which Keats and the rest of them wrote! I do not know in what else England is greatly superior, or dearer to me, than another land and people» [Owen 1967, p. 300]. When he wrote this letter, the young poet had not enlisted to join the war yet (he would on 21 October 1915), but these few lines to his beloved mother – to whom he addressed the majority of his 664 letters – already give evidence of two defining features of Owen's poetics: the legacy of the Romantics, in particular John Keats, and the experience of the First World War.

This paper will focus on the afterlife and metamorphosis of Wilfred Owen's youthful devotion to the English Romantics through the devastating experience of the war which enabled him to find his own, original voice, inspired by the sufferings and horrors of modern warfare. The relationship to the Romantic tradition of prophetic and visionary poetry did develop in a critical and uneasy awareness of its shortcomings and the need for its radical regeneration, but was never rejected by Owen, and remained a constant source of inspiration for his verse.

Wilfred Owen belonged to a lower-middle-class family, he attended a technical school and never entered university, as he was unable to secure a scholarship. As a young boy, he was already very absorbed by poetry, though this was closely connected to his interest in religion. Influenced by his Calvinist mother who wanted him to enter the Church, in 1911 Owen volunteered as an unpaid assistant to the vicar of Dunsden, near Reading, but this experience resulted in a serious religious crisis. When he realized that from a strict Evangelical perspective «all literary activity was suspect», and even «the beauties of language were potentially sinful because they were 'of this world' in their appeal to the senses», he chose poetry over religion and left Dunsden on the verge of a nervous breakdown [Hibberd 1986, pp. 9, 10]. He accepted a position as a teacher at the Berlitz School of Languages in Bordeaux and started what was probably the happiest period of his life, as he discovered French literature and culture (in particular the works of Flaubert and Verlaine), thanks to his friendship with the 'decadent' poet Laurent Tailhade[1].

When the war broke out, Owen felt pressured by the propaganda to volunteer and joined the Manchester Regiment. In March 1917, he fell through a shell-hole and was trapped there for three days, developed a concussion and, after being blown out of the trench during heavy fighting, in May he was diagnosed with shell-shock and sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital, near Edinburgh, where he spent four months. Here Owen became editor of the hospital magazine, *Hydra,* and met Siegfried Sassoon, who already had a reputation as a poet and shared Owen's views. Reading Sassoon's poems and discussing his work with him revolutionised Owen's style and his conception of poetry.[2] He returned to France in August 1918 and in October was awarded the Military Cross for bravery. He was killed in action on 4 November 1918 (aged 25) while crossing the Sambre and Oise Canal near Ors, one week before the armistice. He was buried in the village cemetery of Ors, where today we can visit the impressive building created by the artist Simon Patterson in 2011, *La Maison Forestière Wilfred Owen*. It is a small forester's house where Owen spent the last four nights of his life; it has been transformed into a very unusual museum, a white empty space in which the visitor is offered the unique visual and sensorial experience of reading his poems and listening to them, thus feeling the power of his words [see Minogue and Palmer 2018, pp. 187-212].

Virtually unknown during his lifetime, almost all of Owen's poems appeared posthumously: in 1920 Siegfried Sassoon published the first bestselling collection of 23 *Poems* (reprinted in 1921); in 1931 Edmund Blunden edited *The Poems of Wilfred Owen* adding 19 poems (reprinted with corrections in 1933); in 1963 the Irish poet laureate C. Day Lewis edited *The Collected Po-*

[1] On Owen's 'decadent' period in France and on his relationship to Laurent Tailhade, see Hibberd 1986, pp. 29-54.

ems of Wilfred Owen containing overall 80 poems (he added some juvenilia, minor pieces, and fragments).

By that time, he was widely regarded as Britain's greatest war poet, the most extraordinary interpreter of war realism, and I believe this is the way he is still perceived, though the association between Owen and war poetry has in some ways flattened and oversimplified the reception of his complex and multifaceted poetical production. As observed by Desmond Graham: «the familiarity is especially dangerous as it encourages us to absorb both Owen's poetry and the war itself back into clichés of attitude» [Graham 1984, p. 24].

During his brutal experience in the trenches, Wilfred Owen became aware of the immense distance which separated the soldiers from the civilians and realized that a way to break down this distance was to write about the war, to tell the truth about what he called 'the pity of war' and denounce the unspeakable horror that he was witnessing. Aware that his work could do nothing to help his own lost generation, he aimed to warn the next, and indeed his poetic legacy had a major impact on attitudes to war thereafter.

In the draft for a Preface to a collection of war poems he hoped to publish soon, he wrote (c. May 1918):

> This book is not about heroes. English poetry is not yet fit to speak of them. Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War.
> Above all I am not concerned with Poetry.
> My subject is War, and the pity of War.
> The Poetry is in the pity.
> Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful [Owen 1983, vol. II, p. 535].

It might be argued that, despite his ambiguous desire to create a new type of poetry, this draft reveals a deep ambivalence towards the tradition of Romantic and 'oracular' poetry. As we will see, while striving for change and a new poetical language, Owen paradoxically confirms his connection to a tradition that through the great Romantics reaches back to Dante, and a Romantic reading of Dante. The famous line present in the *Preface*, «My subject is war, and the pity of war», is indeed a direct reference to the *pietà* that is a defining feature of Dante's *Inferno*, as declared at the beginning of the second canto:

> Lo giorno se n'andava, e l'aere bruno
> toglieva li animai che sono in terra
> da le fatiche loro; e io sol uno
> m'apparecchiava a sostener la guerra
> sì del cammino e sì de la pietate,
> che ritrarrà la mente che non erra [Dante 1997, vv.1-6, pp. 45-46].

Like Owen's *Preface*, Dante offers his readers a preliminary definition of the experience that will be central to the poetry that follows. This experience, which is the object of his poetry, is also a 'war' to him (una *guerra*), but where Dante spoke of the "war of pity" (*guerra de la pietate*), Owen speaks of the 'pity of war' [see Mangini 2023, pp. 252-253]. The poetics of the *pity of war*, that is the need to use writing as a testimony of the unimaginable, infernal horrors that his generation had to witness in the trenches, became Owen's mission and one of the most original, yet dramatic, literary achievements of the twentieth century.

Wilfred Owen had begun writing poetry as a teenager. From the age of eighteen he wanted to be a poet and «raised himself largely on a diet of Keats and Shelley, particularly Keats», who appeared constantly in his letters of the period [Najarian 2001, p. 23]. If we analyse his manuscripts and his brother's family biography, what emerges is an ambiguous attitude towards the Romantics, that is on one hand a tendency to idolatrize them, and to imitate them in his first experimental verses, and on the other to identify with them on a personal level, trying to find parallels between his own life and theirs [Bäckman 1979, p. 26]. A great admirer of P.B. Shelley's poetry, the young Owen was deeply impressed by some aspects of Shelley's biography. While in Dunsden (January 1912), he found out that Shelley had lived nearby:

> I find that Shelley lived at a cottage within easy cycling distance from here. And I was very surprised (tho' really I don't know why) to find that he used to 'visit the sick in their beds; kept a regular list of the industrious poor whom he assisted to make up their accounts;' and for a time walked the hospitals in order to be more useful to the poor he visited! I knew the lives of men who produced such marvellous verse could not be otherwise than lovely, and I am being confirmed in this continually [Owen 1967, p. 106].

The almost hagiographic quality of this passage rests on his conviction that the lives of writers who had produced great works of art had likewise to be admirable. This need to find confirmation and answers to his own doubts in the life and works of his favorite authors is particularly evident in Owen's letters and manuscripts written in the months when he was in Dunsden and was experiencing the profound spiritual crisis that would eventually lead him to abandon his position as assistant to the vicar in 1913. For instance, in a letter to his mother (4 January 1913) in which he was discussing his decision to leave Dunsden, he added the following comment:

> It has just struck me that one of the occult Powers that Be may have overheard the ancient desire of my heart to be like the immortals, the immortals of earthly Fame, I mean, and is now on a fair way to granting it. This flight

> of mine from overbearing elders, if it comes off, will only be my version of running away from College (Shelley, Coleridge). Only where in me is the mighty Power of Verse that covered the multitude of sins. It is true I still find great comfort in scribbling; but lately I am deadening to all poetic impulses, save those due to the pressure of Problems pushing me to seek relief in unstopping my mouth [Owen 1967, p. 175].

«Was it Shelley», Hibberd wonders, «who gave Owen the strength to break away from Dunsden and endure the awful warnings which the Vicar must have given?» [Hibberd 1973, p. 31]. Undoubtedly, the decision to abandon the frustrating experience as parish assistant (and any hope of an ecclesiastical career) was encouraged by the idea that the great poets he admired so much had also, as young men rebelled, or 'disobeyed'. The impulse to seek confirmation for his own choices in the works and actions of his great Romantic role models applies, as we have seen, both to Shelley and Keats, though, as Bäckman reminds us, «the qualities in Shelley that obviously appealed most to him were his fervent idealism, his compassionate sympathy with the poor, and his revolutionary zeal». Shelley's style and poetic technique, in fact, were less significant to Owen than his ideals [Bäckman 1979, p. 49] – and in general have influenced him less powerfully than the life and works of John Keats. As Sandra Gilbert has persuasively argued, «to think of Wilfred Owen at the Front is in a way to imagine an avatar of John Keats marching up the Line to a war that would have been unimaginable at the beginning of the nineteenth century» [Gilbert 2013, p. 117].

It was Edmund Blunden, fellow soldier and poet, who for the first-time aligned Wilfred Owen to the figure of John Keats, thus creating «an Owen myth to match the myth of Rupert Brooke. If Brooke could be the early twentieth century's Byron, dying conveniently in the Mediterranean, Blunden establishes Owen as its Keats» [Najarian 2001, p. 20]. The parallel is in fact originally suggested in Blunden's 1931 *Memoir*: «It is impossible to become deeply acquainted with Owen's work and not be haunted by comparisons between his genius and his premature death and the wonder and tragedy of his admired Keats» [Blunden 1977, p. 147]. It would be indeed very difficult to deny the many similarities between the lives of the two poets: each from the lower-middle-class; each died young in their mid-twenties, each had an *annus mirabilis* (1818-19 for Keats, 1917-18 for Owen, who composed nearly all of his poems in slightly over a year) and each, as Sandra Gilbert points out, «became a sacrificial symbol of his generation because each died a resonantly representative death» [Gilbert 2013, p. 117].

What is fascinating about the relationship between these two authors is the fact that such undeniable biographical correspondences are accompanied and perhaps even determined by Owen's own idolatry for John Keats as «both a

literary confederate and a figurative object of affection» [Najarian 2001, p. 23]. As shown by Sven Bäckman, «Owen's Juvenilia are extremely rich in Keatsian analogues and Keatsian phrases and modulations. Often whole poems owe their inspiration to the Romantic poet, and are closely modelled on some of his works» [Bäckman 1979, p. 45]. Keats taught him how to modulate the sounds of words, how to structure a poem, and how to think of himself as a poet. But, even more than in Shelley's case, Owen's admiration for the Romantic predecessor almost obsessively leads him to find similarities between himself and the nineteenth century poet: the lack of university education, the fragile health, the likeness of their handwriting.

On a visit to the old Reading Room of the British Library in the British Museum in 1911, after viewing two letters and two books of manuscripts and poems by Keats, Wilfred Owen noted that: «[his] writing is rather large and slopes like mine – not at all old fashioned and sloping as Shelley's is. He also has my trick of not joining letters in a word» [Owen 1967, p. 82].

If we have a look at his very early production, the poems dedicated to and/or inspired by Keats abound. *Written in a Wood, September 1910* is a clear juvenile example of Owen's devotion to Keats and ends with the certainty: «Yet shall I see fair Keats, and hear his lyre» [Owen 1983, vol. I, p. 2]. And indeed, very soon after that (21 April 1911), following a pilgrimage to Keats's house at Teignmouth, he wrote the sonnet *Written at Teignmouth, on a Pilgrimage to Keats's House*, in which the sublime seascape triggers an elegiac tribute to the «watery memorials of his mystic doom / whose name was writ in water (saith his tomb)» [Owen 1983, vol. I, p. 10].

In the summer of 1912 he wrote the poem, *On Seeing a Lock of Keats's Hair* of which the final stanza reads:

> It is a lock of Adonai's hair!
> I dare not look to long; nor try to tell
> What glories I see glistening, glistening there.
> The unannointed eye cannot perceive their spell.
> Turn to Adonais; his great spirit seek.
> O hear him; he will speak! [Owen 1983, vol. II, p. 447]

This last stanza is a moving testimony of the almost religious trepidation with which Owen approached his idol by whom and about whom he read everything he could. He was interested in Keats the poet as much as he was in the man and at Shrewsbury, he once wrote that:

> The poetry of Keats must have a peculiar charm to every reader, whether familiar with the story of the author or not, but when the circumstances of their composition are known one cannot fail to be doubly attracted by the rich effusions of the young beauty-lover [Quoted in Cuthbertson 2014, p. 31].

While on holiday at Torquay he wrote to his mother (April 1911) that he had brought a Life of Keats[3] and that he had started reading it «'with fear and trembling' to learn the details of his life» and added that «I sometimes feel in reading such books that I would give ten years of life to have been born a hundred years earlier (always providing that I have the same dear mother)» [Owen 1967, p. 69].

After the break of war and the beginning of his new military career, Owen experienced a deep crisis as he was desperately trying to make sense of the horror around him and of his role as a poet. In 1916 he wrote to his brother Harold expressing a new awareness of the inconsistency between the reality of the front and the legacy of the Romantics: «What does Keats have to teach me of rifle and machine-gun drill, how will my pass in Botany teach me to lunge a bayonet, how will Shelley show me how to hate or any poet teach me the trajectory of the bullet?» [Owen 1965, p. 144] Faced with the ghastly experience of the war, Owen went through a deep crisis around 1917, when he realized that his urge to write poetry about the war was at odds with his worship of the Romantics, and he needed to find new directions. In Owen's mature poems of 1917-1918, Keats's influence is less evident as he was trying to give voice to a completely new poetical world, made of cruelty and devastation. Bäckman stresses how «under the pressure of his war experiences, he was trying to liberate himself from his Romantic heritage, by striking completely new paths, or by developing themes and formulae used by the Romantics in new directions» [Bäckman 1979, p. 46]. I would argue that this second strategy – a reconfiguration rather than a rejection of the Romantic heritage – is more relevant to the poems we are discussing: while Owen becomes progressively more aware of his role as a poet, he struggles to reconcile his old Romantic past with the new aims of war poetry. Paradoxically, his experience in the trenches allowed him to gain a new self-confidence as a writer. By New Year's Eve 1917, he knew he wanted to be a poet as he confessed in a famous letter to his mother: «I go out of this year a Poet, my dear Mother, as which I did not enter it. […] I am a poet's poet. I am started. The tugs have left me; I feel the great swelling of the open sea taking my galleon» [Owen 1967, p. 521].

According to Desmond Graham, Owen turned against Keats as his war experience pressed him to reassess and discard Romanticism [Graham 1994, pp. 63-64], and Dominic Hibberd connects this change of attitude to his encounter with Siegfried Sassoon [Hibberd 1986, pp. 95-118]. I believe that a process of detachment from his youthful passionate poetical inspirations was inevitable for a still unexperienced yet gifted poet who was facing the most shocking experience of his life, but I would argue that it was more gradual and less abrupt than most critics have claimed. If we have a look at a sonnet like *With an Identity Disc*, which Owen began at the front in 1917 and revised six months later at Craiglockart (between August and September 1917), we

find many similarities, in tone and motivation, to John Keats's 1818 (but published posthumously in 1848) sonnet *When I have fears that I may cease to be*:

> When I have fears that I may cease to be
> Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain,
> Before high-pilèd books, in charactery,
> Hold like rich garners the full ripened grain;
>
> When I behold, upon the night's starred face,
> Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
> And think that I may never live to trace
> Their shadows with the magic hand of chance;
>
> And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
> That I shall never look upon thee more,
> Never have relish in the faery power
> Of unreflecting love—then on the shore
> Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
> Till love and fame to nothingness do sink [Keats 2007, p. 100].

With an Identity Disc (which has also direct references to sonnet 104 by Shakespeare *To Me, Fair Friend, You Never Can Be Old*) is centered, like its Keatsian archetype, on the idea of the decline of hopes in someone who is about to face certain death:

> If ever I had dreamed of my dead name
> High in the heart of London, unsurpassed
> By Time for ever, and the Fugitive, Fame,
> There seeking a long sanctuary at last, –
>
> Or if I onetime hoped to hide its shame,
> – Shame of success, and sorrow of defeats, –
> Under those holy cypresses, the same
> That shade always the quiet place of Keats,
>
> Now rather thank I God there is no risk
> Of gravers scoring it with florid screed.
> Let my inscription be this soldier's disc…
> Wear it, sweet friend. Inscribe no date nor deed.
> But may thy heart-beat kiss it, night and day,
> Until the name grow blurred and fade away [Owen 1983, vol. I, p. 96].

If Keats's text is of course much more accomplished in execution, what strikes us in Owen's sonnet is once again his reverential attitude towards his romantic idol: the desire of being laid to rest in the same spot as Keats is compared to the aspiration to be buried in the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. But Owen's sonnet is particularly significant: though still inspired by Keats's example, he introduces the new aspect of war – the emotional image of the sweet friend who will be wearing his identity disc after his death, which already anticipates some heartbreaking images that he would develop further in his war poems. Soldiers in the Great War were required to wear two identity discs on a card around their neck. If they were killed, one disc was left with the bodies, and the other was taken to his unit as proof of their passing. *With an Identity Disc* thus represents a transitional work that testifies his search for a new voice but that still seems in between the mere imitation of Romantic manners and postures and his newfound necessity to write about the traumas of the war.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Owen's poetical career is the quickness of its progress. Within a year, between January 1917 and November 1918, he moved from vague and immature pseudo-Keatsian inspiration to an original, dramatically passional, visceral and innovative style. As noticed by Cecil Day Lewis: «No gradual development brought his work to maturity. It was a forced growth, a revolution in his mind» [Lewis 1963, p. 12] that allowed him to find his subject – war. And indeed, during his stay at Craiglockart under the influence of Siegfried Sassoon, – very much like Keats who rapidly developed from the early verses to the great Odes of 1819 – Owen swiftly found his authentic poetical voice and moved from more conventional sonnets like *With an Identity Disc* to his revisionary and powerful poems like *Anthem for Doomed Youth* or *Dulce et Decorum Est.*

Among the major works conceived during this *annus mirabilis, Strange Meeting* should be considered one of the most remarkable, as it reflects directly on the poet's new duty of witnessing «the truth untold, the pity of war». It is a first-person narrative of the encounter between two soldiers in hell, at the end of which it emerges that the narrator had killed the other:

> It seemed that out of battle I escaped
> Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
> Through granites which titanic wars had groined.
> Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
> Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
> Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
> With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
> Lifting distressful hands as if to bless.

And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall,
By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.
With a thousand pains that vision's face was grained;
Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,
And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.
«Strange friend,» I said, «here is no cause to mourn»
[Owen 1983, vol. I, vv. 1-14, p. 148].

The poem is forty-four lines long; the first fourteen are spoken by the narrator in an elegant and at the same time passionate language, which brings us directly into a dreamish/hellish underworld that is charged with literary references [Cyr 2016, p. 113]. *Strange Meeting*, defined by Sassoon as «Owen's ultimate testament, his passport to immortality, and his elegy for the Unknown Warrior of all nations» [quoted in Hibberd 1973, p. 45], is not only an emotional dialogue between two soldier-poets – many critics have interpreted the enemy as the protagonists' *alter* ego – but it is also a dialogue with a tradition of poetry. As we have noticed, the first evident allusion is to Dante's *Inferno*, which probably inspired the very expression of 'the pity of war'. But we could add the encounter with the «encumbered sleepers» who lie groaning while someone springs up «with piteous recognition in fixed eyes», which should remind us of the meeting between Dante and Ciacco in *Inferno* 6. The act of abruptly standing up («one sprang up, and stared») from an indistinct mass of souls lying on the ground as if asleep («encumbered sleepers»), seems to echo the Dantean episode: «Elle giacean per terra tutte quante, / fuor d'una ch'a seder si levò, ratto / ch'ella ci vide passarsi davante» [Dante 1997, vv. 37-39, p. 185]. Owen reproduces in his poem the same process described in the *Inferno*: the poet is addressed by a soul whom at first he doesn't recognize, a soul who stares at him «with piteous recognition in fixed eyes». And *fixed eyes* are in fact Ciacco's «dritti occhi» (v. 91) in Cary's translation, of which Owen owned a copy [see Mangini 2023, pp. 254-257].

The presence of Dante, an author accessed and understood through the mediation of the Romantics as the archetypical poet-prophet, is already quite significant of Owen's relation to this particular aspect of the literary tradition. But what is mostly relevant to our argument is the presence in *Strange Meeting* of intertextual references to two works of P. B. Shelley and John Keats that are, in turn, Dantean and prophetical in their inspiration. The title itself of Owen's poem echoes Shelley's epic political poem *The Revolt of Islam* (1818), a visionary interpretation of the French Revolution transposed into an Oriental setting where the two protagonists, Laon and Cythna, guide a bloodless revolution against the tyrants. Even though they are both killed (burned alive at the stake) and the poem ends with the restoration of despotic power, the two protagonists re-emerge in the end in a paradisiacal realm. *The Revolt of Islam*

is a fascinating early-Shelleyan utopian vision of a society freed from oppression and inequality in which ideals of pacifism and non-violent resistance are praised [see Valentini 2018, pp. 96-101]. The specific source of Owen's poem is Shelley's sequence that reaches its climax in stanza XIII of Canto V, where the ghost of Laon, who was a poet whose songs of freedom had inspired a great uprising against tyranny, is recognized by a friend amongst a multitude of sleeping men. His action brings friends and enemies together, like brothers:

> And one, whose spear had pierced me, leaned beside
> With quivering lips and humid eyes; —and all
> Seemed like some brothers on a journey wide
> Gone forth, whom now *strange meeting* did befall
> In a strange land, round one whom they might call
> Their friend, their chief, their father, for assay
> Of peril, which had saved them from the thrall
> Of death, now suffering. Thus the vast array
> Of those fraternal bands were reconciled that day
> [Shelley 1994, p. 93].

One can easily notice the almost ironic opposition between the optimism of Shelley's passage and Owen's poem, which is infused with hopelessness and resignation, but also with «the sense of the brotherhood of man, and of the ultimate conquest even of death» [Welland 1960, p. 100].

Another strong presence to be found in *Strange Meeting* is once again John Keats. If the description of the cavern in Hell, where the dead sleep and nothing is heard from above, might remind readers of Keats's Cave of Quietude in *Endymion* (Book IV), the atmosphere and mood, the descriptive technique, the rhythm, are all reminiscent of Keats's *Fall of Hyperion. A Dream* [Bäckman 1979, pp. 23-25]. In particular, the meeting between the poet and Moneta, Keats's fascinating symbol of creative imagination, the questioning on the nature of poetry and the description of her haunting, non-human face can be reflected in the haggard and agonizing face of the 'strange friend' that the poet meets in the underworld:

> Then saw I a wan face,
> Not pined by human sorrows, but bright-blanched
> By an immortal sickness which kills not;
> It works a constant change, which happy death
> Can put no end to; deathwards progressing
> To no death was that visage [Keats 2007, pp. 227-228].

In both *Strange Meeting* and *The Fall of Hyperion*, the tormented face of a mysterious figure met by the speaker of the poem plays a crucial part. In par-

ticular, as Hibberd has stressed «the theme of perceiving the truth by looking at a suffering face is presumably a deliberate echo of Keats's sight of the face of Moneta» [Hibberd 1973, p. 132].

In *Strange Meeting* when the narrator says to the «strange friend» that «here is no cause to mourn», the other answers:

> «None,» said the other, «save the undone years,
> The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
> Was my life also; I went hunting wild
> After the wildest beauty in the world,
> Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
> But mocks the steady running of the hour,
> And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.
> For of my glee might many men have laughed,
> And of my weeping something had been left,
> Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
> The pity of war, the pity war distilled [Owen 1983, vol. I, vv. 15-25, p. 148].

This famous passage, the dramatic reply of the strange friend, brings us to the heart of the poem and highlights the deep sadness of the dead soldier who expresses his regret for the «undone years», the years of maturity that will never come as they both died young, but also, as Owen's *Doppelgänger*, he articulates with this very expression his rejection of the past, of an early understanding of Romantic poetry. If, as young poets they «went hunting wild after the wildest beauty in the world», now, after the experience of the trenches and the horrors of warfare, the only regret they can have is that having died, they won't be able to tell to the next generation (as Owen stressed in his Preface) «the truth untold, the pity of war, the pity war distilled». As the poignant dialogue between the two characters unveils their similarities and the infernal atmosphere of the poem epitomizes the War as Hell, the poem reaches its climax when the narrator is slowly forced to recognize himself as a murder:

> I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
> I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned
> Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
> I parried: but my hands were loath and cold.
> Let us sleep now…
> [Owen 1983, vol. I, vv. 40-44, p. 149].

This moving, almost monosyllabic ending represents one of the most powerful messages of Wilfred Owen's poetry: the enemy is not an enemy anymore, he is like me, a poet, who has my same ideals and my same regrets, he is a

friend. Despite the final reconciliation, the poem doesn't end optimistically, as the narrator becomes aware of his guilt and reminds the reader of the horrors of combat. But, as Santanu Das has observed, *Strange Meeting* is «an acknowledgment of war reality that is unique in the corpus of First World War literature» insofar as it denounces «the role of the pacifist poet as a political murderer» [Das 2005, p. 170].

In *Strange Meeting*, thus, Owen reaches a point where he seems to say goodbye to the Romantic ideals of his youth, to the once cherished «wildest beauty in the world», and feels the need of the new poetic voice which will allow him to speak «the truth untold, the pity of war, the pity war distilled». However, his pursuit of a new poetic voice is never really in contrast with the Romantic legacy and doesn't involve its rejection. One of the most considerable achievements of Owen's poetry is his revisionary use of Romantic language and themes to talk about a war that seems to undermine the very tradition to which the poet is still faithful. In a seminal essay of 1919 Middleton Murry, in pointing out the influence of Keats's *Fall of Hyperion* on *Strange Meeting*, had written that «the sombre imagination, the sombre rhythm» of Owen's verse «is that of the dying Keats; the creative impulse is that of Keats» and he argues that «this poem by a boy with the certainty of death in his heart, like his great forerunner, is the most magnificent expression of the emotional significance of the war that has yet been achieved by English poetry» [Murry 1918, p. 1284].

Even in his more mature works, in poems like *Strange Meeting*, where Owen's voice and vision are unmistakably his own, it seems «only appropriate», as Santanu Das has beautifully written, «that the phantasmatic hand of Keats that induced Owen to his poethood with its uncommon slant would figure in its final manifesto» [Das 2014, p. 171]. Shelley's and Keats's presence within one of the last and more significant of Owen's war poems, «his ultimate testament, his passport to immortality», gives paradoxically new life and strength to his message of reconciliation and peace through the means of poetry and the dialogue with the Romantic canon.

Bibliography

Alighieri, D. (1997): *Commedia, vol. primo, Inferno*, Mondadori, Milano.

Bäckman, S. (1979): *Tradition Transformed. Studies in the Poetry of Wilfred Owen*, Lund, Gleerup.

Barker, P. (1992): *Regeneration*, London, Penguin [1st publ. 1991].

Bergonzi, B. (1965): *Heroes' Twilight: a Study of the Literature of the Great War*, London, Constable.

Blunden, E. (1977): « A Memoir» in Day Lewis, C. ed., *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen,* London, Chatto&Windus [1st. publ. 1931].

Breen, J. (1974): «Wilfred Owen: 'Greater Love' and Late Romanticism», in *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, vol. 17, n. 3, pp. 173-183.
Cuthbertson, G. (2014): *Wilfred Owen*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press.
Cyr, M. D. (2016): «The Conscientious Killer: Wilfred Owen's 'Strange Meeting'», in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Spring 2016, vol. 58, n. 1, pp. 108-128.
Das, S. (2005): *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
— (2007): «War Poetry and the Realm of the Senses: Owen and Rosenberg», in T. Kendall, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 73-99.
Deer, P. (2009): *Culture in Camouflage: War, Empire and Modern British Literature*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Fussell, P. (1975): *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press.
Hibberd, D. (1973): «Introduction», in W. Owen, *War Poems and Others*, ed. D. Hibberd, Chatto & Windus, London, pp. 19-50.
— (1986): *Owen the Poet*, London, Macmillan.
Hipp, D. (2008): *The Poetry of Shell Shock: Wartime Trauma and Healing in Wilfred Owen, Ivor Gurney and Siegfried Sassoon*, Jefferson and London, McFarland.
Hynes, S. (1992): *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*, London, Pimlico.
Graves, R. (2000): *Goodbye to All That*, London, Penguin [1st publ. 1929].
Gilbert, S. M. (2013): «Wilfred Owen», in S. Das, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to The Poetry of the First World War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 117-128.
Graham, D. (1984): *The Truth of War: Owen, Blunden, Rosenberg*, Manchester, Carcanet.
Keats, J. (2007): *Selected Poems*, Penguin, London.
Kermode, F. (2002): *Romantic Image,* London-New York, Routledge [1st publ. 1957].
Leed, E. (1979): *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War 1*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979.
Lewis, C. D. (1977): «Introduction», in Day Lewis, C. ed., *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen,* London, Chatto&Windus [first publ. 1963], pp. 11-29.
Mangini, A. M. (2023): «Purgatorial Shadows. Agnizioni dantesche nella poesia di Wilfred Owen», in S. Cenni, E. Bizzotto, eds, *Intarsi Danteschi*, Firenze, Consiglio Regionale della Toscana, pp. 251-268.
Minogue, S., Palmer, A. (2018): «Dulce et decorum est», in S. Minogue, A. Palmer, eds, *The Remembered Dead. Poetry, Memory and the First World War,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 187-212.

Murry, J. M. (1919): «The Condition of English Poetry», in *Athenaeum*, 5 December 1919, pp. 1283-1285.
Najarian, J. (2001): « 'Greater Love': Wilfred Owen, Keats and a Tradition of Desire», in *Twentieth Century Literature,* Spring, vol. 47, n. 1, pp. 20-38.
Owen, H. (1965): *Journey from Obscurity. Wilfred Owen 1893-1918*. *Memoirs of the Owen Family*, vol. III: *War*, London, Oxford University Press.
Owen, W. (1967): *Collected Letters,* ed. H. Owen and J. Bell, London, Oxford University Press.
Owen, W. (1983): *The Complete Poems and Fragments,* ed. J. Stallworthy, vols. 2, London, Chatto&Windus.
Pender, E. E. (2018): «Introduction: Strange Meetings», in *Classical Receptions Journal*, vol. 10, n. 4, pp. 333-355.
Rawlinson, M. (2007): «Wilfred Owen», in T. Kendall, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 114-133.
Sarnowski, M. (2018): «Enemy Encounters in the War Poetry of Wilfred Owen, Keith Douglas and Randall Jarrell», in *Humanities*, vol. 7 (2018), n. 3, https://doi.org/10.3390/h7030089 [last accessed 15/11/2024].
Shelley, P. B. (1994): «The Revolt of Islam», in *The Works of P.B. Shelley*, Ware, Wordsworth Poetry Library, pp. 49-158.
Silkin, J. (1998): *Out of Battle. The Poetry of the Great War*, Basingstoke and London, Macmillan [1st publ. 1972].
Stallworthy, J. (1977): *Wilfred Owen*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Tomlinson, A. (1993): « Strange Meeting in Strange Land: Wilfred Owen and Shelley», in *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 32, n. 1, pp. 75-95.
Valentini, M. (2018): «The Revolt of Islam: Texts, Subtexts, Contexts», in *The Keats-Shelley Review*, vol. 32, n. 2, pp. 96-101.
Van Ghent, D. B., Robinson, J. C. (2014): *Keats. The Myth of the Hero*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
Welland, D. S. R. (1960): *Wilfred Owen: A Critical Study*, London, Chatto & Windus.

Conflict and Peaceful Democracy: Percy Bysshe Shelley's Discourse of Sustainable Progressivism

Abstract

This article explores Percy Bysshe Shelley's ideas of revolution and reform with a focus on his political prose writings. I argue that his pamphlets and essays, from *An Address to the Irish People* (1812) to the posthumously published *A Philosophical View of Reform* (1920), reveal the gradual, linguistic construal of a sustainable form of progressivism. Unlike his earlier poetic works, these writings, as I intend to show, embrace a gradualist and reformist agenda. To this end, I firstly introduce the concepts of «discourse», «sustainability», and «progressivism». Subsequently, I discuss Shelley's discursive construction of revolution, reform, and the social actors involved by focusing on select key words and linguistic strategies that enable him to recontextualise reform as a social practice. Finally, I examine the extent to which *A Philosophical View* recasts Shelley's reformist ideals within a framework grounded in sustainability and futurity, as the reception of his works suggest.

Marco Canani

Percy Bysshe Shelley's poetry and prose reveal a long and complex engagement with democratic and reformist ideals, which he promoted to raise awareness among the lower and working classes, as well as the intellectuals whom he believed should lead change [Crisafulli 1999, pp. 193-195]. The English establishment of the time had strongly rejected his radicalism since *The Necessity of Atheism*. Shelley's attack of religious dogma, and his refusal to recant the views outlined in the pamphlet, famously resulted in his expulsion from Oxford in 1811. Two years later, he decided to print his first substantial work, *Queen Mab*: *A Philosophical Poem* (1813; 1816), privately. As he wrote to Thomas Hookman, he expected «no success» but hoped to reach at least «the aristocrats: They will not read it, but their sons & daughters may» [Shelley 1964, I, p. 361]. Shelley, in other words, was targeting futurity, the younger generation who might take action against

inequality and oppression once made aware of social ills. «Whence, think'st thou», the Fairy wonders,

> kings and parasites arose?
> Whence that unnatural line of drones, who heap
> Toil and unvanquishable penury
> On those who build their palaces, and bring
> Their daily bread? — From vice, black loathsome vice;
> From rapine, madness, treachery, and wrong;
> From all that 'genders misery, and makes
> Of earth this thorny wilderness; from lust,
> Revenge, and murder […];
> When man's maturer nature shall disdain
> The playthings of its childhood; — kingly glare
> Will lose its power to dazzle; its authority
> Will silently pass by; the gorgeous throne
> Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,
> Fast falling to decay; whilst falsehood's trade
> Shall be as hateful and unprofitable
> As that of truth is now (III, ll. 118-126; 130-137) [Shelley 2014a, pp. 294-295].

The Fairy's appeal to a «maturer» stage in human history embodies Shelley's intention to target a readership whose revolutionary potential was still to be developed. The poet delegates revolution to futurity, to which he entrusts the duty of redressing the wrongs of the present, in the belief that «political action» paradoxically stands «outside the conditions that govern contemporary politics» [Franta 2007, p. 118]. In this sense, *Queen Mab* exemplifies a pivot of Shelley's political aesthetics, that is, the dialogue between present concerns and future scenarios which contributed to shaping the reception of his work as «utilitarian, polemical and direct» [Bennet 1999, p. 158].

Despite Shelley's desire to reach aristocratic households, *Queen Mab*, as George Bernard Shaw remarked, became the Bible of the British radicals and a pillar of socialist culture once affordable, pirated editions reached a wider public, Owenites and Chartists included [Scrivener 1982, p. 67; Franta 2007, p. 118; Duffy 2009]. Similarly, the poet's call for action in «England in 1819» and «Song: To the Men of England» made his work a manifesto of the working class, with Friedrich Engels famously praising Shelley as «the genius, the prophet» of «the proletariat and the Socialists» in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) [Engels 1999, p. 247].

Along with this idea of Shelley as the spokesperson of radical, revolutionary ideologies, there is scholarly consensus that his political aesthetics significantly changed after the Peterloo Massacre. His immediate response to the tragedy

that took place in Manchester in August 1819, *The Mask of Anarchy*, endorses political intervention while fostering a culture of resistance [Crisafulli 2021], and in so doing it expands on the ethics of endurance and nonviolence that Shelley had outlined in *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). While I agree that 1819 represented a turning point in the poet's development of «an ostensibly gradualist agenda» [Duffy 2003, p. 78], I would like to suggest that Peterloo was also instrumental to Shelley's discursive reconfiguration of revolution and reform. Following «the bloodiest political event of the nineteenth century on British soil» [Poole 2019, p. 1], his poetic language converges with the less utopian, progressivist views of his political prose.

Within this background, in this article I explore Shelley's views of revolution and reform, intended here as forms of protest within national borders in order to obtain civil rights – namely social and political justice, and electoral franchise. I argue that his political pamphlets, from *An Address to the Irish People* (1812) to the posthumously published *A Philosophical View of Reform* (1920), reveal the gradual, linguistic construal of a sustainable form of progressivism. Unlike his earlier poetic works, these texts, as I intend to show, embrace a gradualist, reformist agenda. To this end, I firstly provide a methodological introduction to the critical categories I apply to the investigation of Shelley's political writings, that is, «discourse», «sustainability», and «progressivism». Subsequently, I discuss his discursive construction of revolution, reform, and the social actors involved in these forms of protest by focusing on select key words and linguistic strategies that enable Shelley to recontextualise reform as a social practice. Finally, I examine the extent to which *A Philosophical View* recasts Shelley's reformist ideals within a framework grounded in sustainability and futurity, as the reception of his writings – even outside the British context – suggests.

Discourse, progressivism, sustainability

Due to its linguistic and cultural implications, «discourse» is a complex concept. According to Michael Foucault, it consists of «practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak» [Foucault 1972, p. 49], and as such it expresses a well-defined relationship between power and knowledge. Discourse, in other words, relies on institutionalised sets of linguistic features that determine what can be thought and said about reality, though admitting of alternative or counterdiscourses [Mills 2004, pp. 14-20]. In this sense, discourses, as Norman Fairclough claims, are «ways of representing aspects of the world», such as «the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the "mental world" of thoughts, feelings, beliefs […], and the social world» [Fairclough 2003, p. 124]. This complex nexus of ideas and frames convey, through language, a perspective on and of the world, including so-

cial identities and social relationships. This critical viewpoint also allows for an investigation of Shelley's construction of the necessity of reform by considering his representation of the British socio-political contingency and his attempt at reconciling it with the demands of the lower and the working classes. Consequently, the construal of class conflict he provides in his political writings suggests that change needs to be attained in a gradualist and sustainable way.

As far as political discourse is concerned, it must be noted that sustainability is a key element of the contemporary debate, and it is a pivot of the UN 2030 Agenda. The concept was first defined by the UN Brundtland Commission as «meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs» [UN 1987].[1] In the intentions of the UN, sustainability is therefore based on two pillars: the analysis of the necessities of the present, and their fulfilment in such a way as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations. These aspects are also found in less specialised definitions of sustainability. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, for example, insists on a cooperative, intergenerational agreement in order to preserve the welfare of all the social actors involved:

> *sustainability*, Long-term viability of a community, set of social institutions, or societal practice. In general, sustainability is understood as a form of intergenerational ethics in which the environmental and economic actions taken by present persons do not diminish the opportunities of future persons to enjoy similar levels of wealth, utility, or welfare [Encyclopædia Britannica 2021].

Sustainability implies stability and resilience, two elements that are fundamental «to maintain or improve the state and availability of desirable materials or conditions over the long term» [Harrington 2016, p. 365]. With specific reference to politics, this outlook entails a progressivist approach so as to assess the initiatives that may improve human society while accommodating present and future needs. In this sense, «progressivism» is here understood as a political philosophy fostering social reform with change occurring in a strategically planned manner over time: as such it is opposed to both conservatism and sheer radicalism [see Kloppenberg 1986].[2]

[1] The World Commission on Environment and Development was founded in 1983 to pursue sustainable development goals worldwide. Its work became commonly known as the «Brundtland report» after its chairwoman, Gro Harlem Brundtland.

[2] This definition of «progressivism» is also different from its usage in political history, and its association with the development of nineteenth and twentieth-century liberalism [cf. Krieger 2001, pp. 693-694].

Sustainable democracy: Shelley and Irish emancipation

Sustainability and progressivism may sound at odd with Shelley, a poet whose political views have often – and rightly – been framed as radical and utopian. In *Radical Shelley* (1982), for example, Michael Scrivener argued that Shelley's poetry is the expression of «a growing pessimism even though he never ceased being a political radical». The critic, it must be added, also suggested that over time Shelley hedged William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft's radicalism in favour of a gradualist approach to change [Scrivener 1982, pp. 3, 16]. However, I claim that what Scrivener terms «growing pessimism» is indicative of the poet's "growing awareness" of the little sociopolitical opportunity that a revolution would afford, an idea that culminated in the belief, as Shelley wrote to Leigh Hunt in November 1819, that resistance and forbearance were essential «to hold the balance between popular impatience and tyrannical obstinacy» [Shelley 1964, II, p. 153].

Shelley's political prose, however, follows a different developmental pattern. While he conceived poetry as the locus of revolution, pamphlets and essays provided him with the space for a more articulate debate, allowing him to reconcile his passionate engagement with politics with a pragmatic outlook. It is in his political essays that Shelley calls for action while discursively constructing revolution as the attainment of democratic change based on compromise, reform, and progressivism. From this perspective, his pamphlets contain in a nutshell the post-Peterloo agenda that he voiced in *The Mask of Anarchy*.

An early example is *An Address, to the Irish People*. Published anonymously in 1812, the pamphlet is a call for agitation to repeal the Act of Union 1707, which Shelley sees as a viable means for Catholic emancipation. In the Advertisement to the reader, «the Author» states that his intention is:

> to awaken in the minds of the Irish poor, a knowledge of their real state, summarily pointing out the evils of that state, and suggesting rational means of remedy.—Catholic Emancipation, and a Repeal of the Union Act […] being treated of in the following address, as grievances which unanimity and resolution may remove […] [Shelley 1993, p. 8].

The pamphlet appeared one year before *Queen Mab*. Shelley's construal of revolution develops in an argumentative prose text that allows him to pursue different linguistic, rhetoric, and discursive strategies in comparison with the aesthetically charged space of poetry. More specifically, the analysis of select lexical items sheds light on Shelley's representation of the people involved in a revolutionary vs. reformist movement, their relationships, and the actions that they should take based on expectable outcomes. To this end, the parties involved may be considered as *social actors*, that is, as participants in

a social context denoted by specific identities and practices. These elements, as discourse analyst Theo van Leeuwen argues, determine the ways in which social actors are represented through language, creating patterns of inclusion and exclusion, individualisation and collectivisation, legitimisation and delegitimisation [van Leeuwen 2008].

Shelley opens his *Address* by drawing a distinction between collective identities based on nationality (Irish vs. English) and religion (Catholics vs. Protestants). However, he immediately deconstructs this taxonomy by resorting to a process of *assimilation*, which represents individuals as a group or a community [van Leeuwen 2008, pp. 37-38]. Consequently, separation is dispelled through a process of rapprochement that foregrounds equality and harmony as the basis for a democratic revolution:

> I hope there are none among you who will read this address with prejudice or levity, because it is made by an Englishman, indeed, I believe there are not. The Irish are a brave nation. They have a heart of liberty in their breasts, but they are much mistaken if they fancy that a stranger cannot have as warm a one. Those are my brothers and my countrymen, who are unfortunate. I should like to know what there is in a man being an Englishman, a Spaniard, or a Frenchman, that makes him worse or better than he really is [Shelley 1993, p. 9].

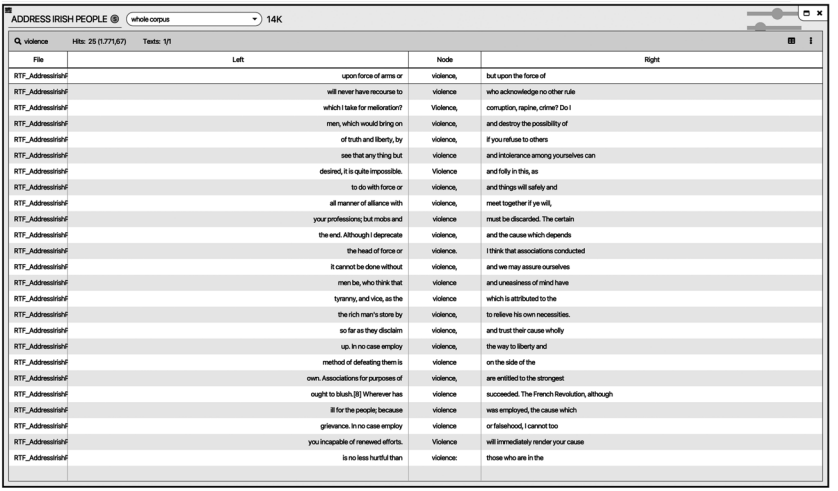
The assimilation, or harmonious reconciliation of groups regardless of nationality or religion is the basis for Shelley's prescription of a non-violent form of protest. This is patent in his usage of two nouns, «mob» and «violence», which he exploits to encourage a process of gradual bridging rather than disruption. The noun «mob», for example, is traditionally associated with rioting rather than peaceful demonstration for the advocacy of rights.[3] The key word in context analysis (*KWIC*) I have carried out with the Lancaster University corpus toolbox #LancsBox reveals that the noun «mob» occurs only four times in *An Address, to the Irish People*. Shelley uses it to construe crowds that may raise suspicion, elicit preventive repression, and postpone democratic change insofar as they resort to violence:

> You know what is meant by a mob, it is an assembly of people who without foresight or thought, collect themselves to disapprove of by force any measure which they dislike. An assembly like this can never do any thing but harm, tumultuous proceedings must retard the period when thought and coolness will produce freedom and happiness […] [Shelley 1993, p. 18].

[3] Unsurprisingly, the word «mob» often recurs in news reports of radical gatherings and protests and was largely employed in the newspaper coverage of Peterloo [see Anselmo 2021].

Aware of the mental frames connected with «mobs» and their rallying practices, Shelley warns that «associations» should be «conducted with peaceable firmness, being earnestly recommended, as means for embodying that unanimity and firmness» [Shelley 1993, p. 8]. Violent rallying is to be avoided for its cost, and most of the twenty-five occurrences of the word «violence» are coupled with negative markers. More specifically, Shelley resorts to noun phrases («Violence, corruption, rapine, crime»; «Violence and folly»), indefinite pronouns («In no case employ violence or falsehood»), and modal verbs («violence must be discarded») that discourage violence in the people's best interests:

> they will *never* have recourse to violence who acknowledge no other rule of behaviour but virtue and justice. […] In *no case* employ violence, the way to liberty and happiness is *never* to transgress the rules of virtue and justice. Liberty and happiness are founded upon virtue and justice, if you destroy the one, you destroy the other [Shelley 1993, pp. 14, 17, emphasis mine].



ADDRESS IRISH PEOPLE | whole corpus | 14K

violence | Hits: 25 (1.771,67) | Texts: 1/1

File	Left	Node	Right
RTF_AddressIrishF	upon force of arms or	violence,	but upon the force of
RTF_AddressIrishF	will never have recourse to	violence	who acknowledge no other rule
RTF_AddressIrishF	which I take for melioration?	Violence,	corruption, rapine, crime? Do I
RTF_AddressIrishF	men, which would bring on	violence,	and destroy the possibility of
RTF_AddressIrishF	of truth and liberty, by	violence,	if you refuse to others
RTF_AddressIrishF	see that any thing but	violence	and intolerance among yourselves can
RTF_AddressIrishF	desired, it is quite impossible.	Violence	and folly in this, as
RTF_AddressIrishF	to do with force or	violence,	and things will safely and
RTF_AddressIrishF	all manner of alliance with	violence,	meet together if ye will,
RTF_AddressIrishF	your professions; but mobs and	violence	must be discarded. The certain
RTF_AddressIrishF	the end. Although I deprecate	violence,	and the cause which depends
RTF_AddressIrishF	the head of force or	violence.	I think that associations conducted
RTF_AddressIrishF	it cannot be done without	violence,	and we may assure ourselves
RTF_AddressIrishF	men be, who think that	violence	and uneasiness of mind have
RTF_AddressIrishF	tyranny, and vice, as the	violence	which is attributed to the
RTF_AddressIrishF	the rich man's store by	violence,	to relieve his own necessities.
RTF_AddressIrishF	so far as they disclaim	violence,	and trust their cause wholly
RTF_AddressIrishF	up. In no case employ	violence,	the way to liberty and
RTF_AddressIrishF	method of defeating them is	violence	on the side of the
RTF_AddressIrishF	own. Associations for purposes of	violence,	are entitled to the strongest
RTF_AddressIrishF	ought to blush.[8] Wherever has	violence	succeeded. The French Revolution, although
RTF_AddressIrishF	ill for the people; because	violence	was employed, the cause which
RTF_AddressIrishF	grievance. In no case employ	violence	or falsehood, I cannot too
RTF_AddressIrishF	you incapable of renewed efforts.	Violence	will immediately render your cause
RTF_AddressIrishF	is no less hurtful than	violence:	those who are in the

Figure 1: Concordance lines for «violence» in *An Address, to the Irish People* using #Lancasbox

Shelley explicitly couples mobbers with violence, as is evident in the prescription, «disclaim all manner of alliance with violence, meet together if ye will, but do not meet in a mob. […] mobs and violence must be discarded» [Shelley 1993, p. 22]. To deploy his vision of revolution based on the avoidance of violence, Shelley exploits what van Leeuwen defines as *legitimisation*

and *delegitimisation*. These linguistic strategies recontextualise specific social practices, often utilising evaluation and judgments alluding to customs and traditions, institutions, or history [van Leeuwen 2008, pp. 20-21]. In the *Address*, Shelley delegitimises violent protests by referring to recent historical events such as the French Revolution. Although he believed that it had changed history forever, marking the end of slavery for the French people, Shelley firmly condemned the bloodshed it implied. The tragic aftermaths of the Revolution were, in fact, the product of violence, proving that it may be counterproductive. However, he qualifies the revolutionaries as «the people» rather than a «mob», therefore implying their *bona fide*: «the cause which they vindicated was that of truth, but they gave it the appearance of a lie» [Shelley 1993, p. 22].

It must be pointed out that Shelley's endorsement of peaceful democracy in *An Address, to the Irish People* is still indebted to a utopian, Godwinian outlook. The reiteration of the negative pronoun «no», for example, is used to describe a "non-place" that is constructed by repeatedly refusing conflict and inequality. The very word «no» appears sixty-seven times in the text, with thirty occurrences in one single paragraph devoted to sketching the perfect society. Shelley's concept of peaceful rallying is idealist, but also "utopian" in that it presupposes a non-place. This is «a happy state of society» with «no pomp and no parade» and, among other things, «no rents, no debts, no taxes, no frauds of any kind» [Shelley 1993, p. 26].

As a linguistic strategy, negation requires that different discourses be simultaneously cited and denied in order to provide a solution or an alternative [Dancygier 2012, pp. 69, 72]. Shelley does conjure up an alternative social order, one where «Vice and misery, pomp and poverty, power and obedience, would then be banished altogether» [Shelley 1993, p. 26]. However, he does not envisage a viable alternative to the existing state of things. Critics such as Paul O'Brien and Michael Scrivener see this as the main fault of the pamphlet, which is ineffective in that it addresses too large political issues at the expense of more urgent concerns [O'Brien 2002, pp. 103-104; Scrivener 2013, p. 166]. Still, *An Address, to the Irish People* is a passionate defence of tolerance and freedom, and lays the basis for the gradualist, sustainable approach to democracy that Shelley matured in his subsequent political writings.

Activating and aggregating social actors

Shelley's second Irish pamphlet, *Proposals for an Association of Philanthropists* (1812), explicitly targets the causes of social evil in Ireland, pitting «the eyeless monster Bigotry» and «the palsied beldame Superstition» against «Reason» and «Philanthropy» [Shelley 1993, p. 43]. His argument, however,

is flawed by a certain degree of ambiguity, if not by a paradox, that reiterates the difficulty in providing an actual alternative that one finds in the *Address*. While warning against «the hazard and horror of Revolutions», the poet states that efforts for reform may «not be kept alive by each citizen sitting quietly beside his own fire-side, and saying that things are going on well, because the rain does not beat on *him*, because *he* has books and leisure to read them» [Shelley 1993, p. 52, emphasis in the text].

Cian Duffy is right in claiming that Shelley's early political statements struggle to find a balance between «a largely ineffectual quietism and a violent revolutionary action» [Duffy 2003, p. 78]. In the *Proposals*, however, he represents the people he targets through two linguistic strategies that van Leeuwen terms *activation* and *aggregation*. The former implies representing social actors as forces dynamically engaged in the activity that is described rather than simply construing them as the beneficiaries of change. Aggregation, instead, is a type of assimilation that qualifies people as a group or a category rather than individuals [van Leeuwen 2008, pp. 32-35]. Both strategies enable Shelley to target his addressees as actors who must be involved in socio-political change without construing them as a violent mob.[4] In the following passage, for example, aggregation in instrumental in promoting joint efforts in place of individual initiatives:

> I think that individuals acting singly, with whatever energy, can never effect so much as a society, I propose that all those whose views coincide with those that I have avowed, who perceive the state of the public mind in Ireland, who think the present a fit opportunity for attempting to fix its fluctuations at Philanthropy, who love all mankind, and are willing actively to engage in its cause, or passively to endure the persecutions of those who are inimical to its success; I propose to these to form an association for the purposes, first, of debating on the propriety of whatever measures may be agitated; and secondly, for carrying, by united or individual exertion, such measures into effect when determined on [Shelley 1993, p. 44].

The *Proposals* does not target the Irish people, but the intellectual leadership of the country, the philanthropists who should diffuse «knowledge and virtue», and «throw light on any methods of alleviation of moral and political evil» [Shelley 1993, pp. 44-45]. Significantly, intellectuals are represented

[4] The *KWIC* analysis carried out with #LancsBox reveals only one occurrence of the word «mob» in the *Proposals.* As in *An Address, to the Irish People*, the term refers to actions that Shelley discourages from taking, «political cant, which, like the songs of "Rule Britannia" and "God save the King," are but abstracts of the caterpillar creed of courtiers, cut down to the taste and comprehension of a mob» [Shelley 1993, p. 48].

here as social actors, the agents who are invited to undertake, rather than undergoing, the steps towards reform. This is realised through relative and infinitive clauses that qualify the people as the agents of reform. What critics like Duffy and O'Brien see as the expression of ambiguity or ineffectuality, I believe, is the linguistic counterpart of Shelley's awareness of the necessity of a gradual and future-oriented approach whose outcomes ultimately coincide with those expected from revolution. This is clear when one considers the use of nouns pertaining to the semantic field of conflict in statements where Shelley examines the opportunity of «the extermination of the eyeless monster bigotry» or the «annihilation» of the wrongs suffered by the Irish, which, however, should be achieved by means of «palliation» [Shelley 1993, pp. 42-43].

With domestic affairs becoming more compelling in the post-Napoleonic period, ambiguous stances gradually disappear from Shelley's political prose. Between 1815 and 1819, his pamphlets show a more rational bent and explicitly argue for a progressive and sustainable approach to change. This is manifest in *A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote*, which he circulated under the pseudonym "The Hermit of Marlow" in March 1817. In keeping with the contemporary movement for Parliamentary reform, the pamphlet is a call for a meeting to be held at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in London to discuss which actions to take.

Shelley does not argue for radical changes such as universal male suffrage or the institution of a republican government. He insists on a reformist approach that may prove safer in ensuring feasible change, and this is patent in the way he articulates his argument. By breaking the text down into bullet points that deconstruct and summarise the reasons for parliamentary reform, the *Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote* outlines the steps to be taken – namely, broader representation in the House of Commons, the organisation of a census to ascertain popular will, and fundraising activities to support the proposal while avoiding «revolutionary and disorganizing schemes» that may jeopardise its constitutionality [Shelley 1993, pp. 173-174].

The utopian bent of *An Address, to the Irish People*, with its reiterated use of negation and its allusions to a social "non-place" is replaced in the *Proposal* by substitution, which provides an alternative in view of its discursive legitimacy. More specifically, Shelley exploits the discourse of legitimisation [van Leeuwen 2008, p. 20], as evidenced by statements such as «the misgovernment to which Parliament has afforded a constitutional sanction», or «this meeting […] declares that its object is purely constitutional» [Shelley 1993, pp. 173-174]. The KWIC analysis conducted confirms that nouns pertaining to the semantic field of conflict, such as «mob» and «violence», are absent, preluding to the ethics of endurance that shaped Shelley's poetry and prose even more clearly after Peterloo.

Reform as conflictless revolution

In *England in 1819*, James Chandler emphasises the impact of the Peterloo Massacre on nineteenth-century English culture. The event, Chandler illustrates, had profound effects on collective memory and, by extension, on representational paradigms. As a result, literature devised an until then unprecedented political and self-historical consciousness [Chandler 1999, pp. 6, 18]. Though living in Italy, Shelley was extremely concerned with the political situation in England, fearing that the climate of repression institutionalised with the Six Acts may fuel further hostility and violence. As he wrote to Leigh Hunt in November 1819, he was convinced of the need «to inculcate with fervour both the right of resistance and the duty of forbearance» [Shelley 1964, II, p. 153]. These two keywords – «resistance» and «forbearance» – are central to his most articulate stance on the need to attain reform through a long-term and gradual process, *A Philosophical View of Reform*.[5] Published posthumously in 1920, the essay deploys a sustainable and progressive approach to democracy, providing an analysis of the costs and benefits of a reform scheme, and suggesting that reform may be postponed in order to create the best conditions for its attainment.

Shelley consulted Hunt for advice on the publication of *A Philosophical View* in May 1820, pointing out that he had intended it as «a kind of standard book for the philosophical reformers politically considered, like Jeremy Bentham's something, but different & perhaps more systematic» [Shelley 1964, II, p. 201]. The manuscript of the essay includes a summary of the four points that Shelley focuses on, organised as a concise bullet-point list that reiterates the textual strategy he had used in *A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote*:

1. Sentiment of the Necessity of Change.
2. Practicability and Utility of such Change.
3. State of Parties as regards it.
4. Probable Mode – Desirable Mode [Shelley 1920, p. 6].

Shelley's wide-ranging examination of nineteenth-century Britain dwells on political and economic issues, investigating the problems of inequality, inflation and the national debt, and the failure of Malthusian politics. Moreover, his enquiry highlights the historical causes accounting for the ills existing in

[5] In the aftermath of the Peterloo Massacre, the same attitude shaped Shelley's immediate response to the tragedy, *The Mask of Anarchy*: «Stand ye calm and resolute, / Like a forest close and mute, / With folded arms and looks which are / Weapons of unvanquished war» (ll. 323-326) [Shelley 2014b, p. 60].

Britain as well as in other European and non-European countries, thus offering insights into the «ideological machinations» that legitimised tyrannies across time [Mieszkowski 2022, p. 115]. Shelley devotes the first section of the introduction to «The Rise of Modern Despotism», arguing that domination and imposture are enforced on discursive grounds. This is the case with Christianity, whose principles of brotherhood and freedom have been fit into a deceitful narrative serving the purposes of tyranny:

> Names borrowed from the life and opinions of Jesus Christ were employed as symbols of domination and imposture; and a system of liberty and equality – for such was the system planted by that great Reformer – was perverted to support oppression. Not his doctrines, for they are too simple and direct to be susceptible of such perversion, but the mere names [Shelley 1920, p. 2].

Shelley lays bare the discursive construction of domination, which is enforced and validated through language. In so doing, his examination suggests that oppression and tyranny are the product of specific forms of government that pursue specific discursive practices.[6] Within this framework, Shelley even de-emphasises revolutionary politics, recontextualising it on the ground of its opportunity. Among the main concerns of *A Philosophical View* is that a profit-and-loss assessment be carried out before introducing franchise and representational reforms. Shelley does not downplay their importance; instead, he claims the urgency of reform through a legitimisation/delegitimisation strategy that pits misgovernment against natural rights:

> the sure character of misgovernment is misery, and first discontent and, if that be despised, then insurrection, as the legitimate expression of that misery. The public right to demand happiness is a principle of nature; […] public happiness is the substance and the end of political institutions [Shelley 1920, p. 49].

Suggesting an alternative between despotism and revolution implies, in turn, a redefinition of the very idea of «reform». Although the «period of conciliation» is over, Shelley argues, revolutionary measures may prove counterproductive if the masses have not been educated to reform. This is the case

[6] This assumption would become a pivot of cultural history in the second half of the nineteenth century, beginning with Jakob Burckhardt's examination of the state as a work of art in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) and Johan Huizinga's studies on medieval civilisation. Interestingly, the discursive construction of revolution and reform characterising Shelley's political writings is coupled in Burckhardt and Huizinga with the idea that domination is enacted discursively.

with political franchise, which might fuel instability if the population has not been gradually instructed to exercising this right:

> Any sudden attempt at universal suffrage would produce an immature attempt at a Republic. It is better that an object so inexpressibly great and sacred should never have been attempted than that it should be attempted and fail. It is no prejudice to the ultimate establishment of the boldest political innovations that we temporize so that when they shall be accomplished they may be rendered permanent [Shelley 1920, p. 72].

As far as social actors are concerned, Shelley assigns this role to the «true patriot», the leader who should infuse the population with «enthusiasm and confidence» in order to promulgate «political truth» [Shelley 1920, p. 72]. Moreover, he lists the political responsibilities that the true patriot is entrusted with, from discouraging unlawful associations that would prevent citizens from taking part in change to providing an example of freedom from subordination and fear [Crisafulli 1999, pp. 200-201].

From the point of view of linguistic strategies, Shelley no longer pursues negation via specific markers such as negative verbs and pronouns as he had done in *An Address, to the Irish People*. In *A Philosophical View of Reform*, he opts for a sequence of statements constructed with the negative pronoun «no» that have a different pragmatic value.[7] Even in its non-violent, rational form, a radical revolution is no longer presented as a desirable condition. If the population is not prepared for a newly established sociopolitical structure, further conflict may arise, leading to an unsustainable reform process:

> it is no matter how slow, gradual and cautious be the change; we shall demand more and more with firmness and moderation, never anticipating but never deferring the moment of successful opposition, so that the people may become habituated to exercising the functions of sovereignty, in proportion as they acquire the possession of it [Shelley 1920, p. 76].

Reform, then, needs to be based on the principle of sustainability. In other words, it must be implemented in such a way as to support and maintain its outcomes and implications over time. This cautionary approach is instrumental in securing a process of democratic change which is peaceful and at the same time incremental. Only sustainable and progressive petitioning ensures obtaining concrete, measurable rights without jeopardising the success of the reform movement, since «nothing is more idle than to reject a limited benefit because

[7] Interestingly, Shelley also resorts to the rhetorics of negation when defining freedom in *The Mask of Anarchy*. In ll. 156-212, freedom is construed by providing practical examples of its absence. In this way, liberty is presented as the negation of slavery.

we cannot without great sacrifices obtain an unlimited one» [Shelley 1920, p. 76]. Shelley's earlier utopian views are replaced here by a pragmatic approach that is conscious of its potential, as well as of its limitation. His idea of reform endorses a utilitarian principle based on optimising resources and results, in the belief that «patience and reason and endurance are the means of a calm yet irresistible progress» [Shelley 1920, p. 67].

In conclusion, sustainability is the keyword that illuminates Shelley's last, and certainly most extensive examination of reform and the ways in which libertarian change is to be attained. The progress towards democracy needs to be gradual, and unlike *An Address, to the Irish People* and *Queen Mab*, *A Philosophical View of Reform* illustrates the conditions that should be set, the actions that must be taken, and the outcomes that are to be expected, rather than simply and ideally listing the wrongs to be redressed.

Futurity: the political readings of Shelley

For decades, the reception of Shelley 's writings was divided between critics who lamented his ineffectuality, and critics who recognised his endorsement of a non-violent, progressivist path to reform. A more persistent dichotomy concerns the attention that scholars and readers have devoted to his prose works as opposed to his poetry, tracing «two stories and two portraits of Shelley» [Behrendt 2008, p. 9].

A member of Leigh Hunt's coterie in the 1830s, George Henry Lewes pitted Shelley's passionate humanism against the commonly held assumption that his political ideas were based on a «chimera». In his review of the 1839 edition of *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, Lewes stated that the poet's «vital truth» consisted precisely in his views on «progression, humanity, or civilization, democracy» [Lewes 1841, p. 321]. Shelley's contemporaries had failed to grasp them, but their centrality in the Victorian reception of the poet is attested by George Eliot's *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life* (1871-72). The novel is set in the years leading to the 1832 Reform Act, which redistributed constituencies and expanded franchise in England and Wales. Eliot, who was in a relationship with Lewes and was close to Leigh Hunt's son, Thornton, appreciated Shelley's sustainable reformism. In *Middlemarch*, Mr. Brooke's commitment when standing for the elections is reminiscent of the poet's conception of the «true patriot»: «Middlemarch is a little backward, I admit – the freemen are a little backward. But we shall educate them – we shall bring them on, you know» [Eliot 2003, p. 384].

The necessity that change should be guided by an enlightened leadership, and the importance of endorsing non-violent forms of resistance to attain reform, would become key to the political reception of Shelley well beyond the British context. While in South Africa, Gandhi's activism against Indian dis-

crimination and his support of the Zulu Kingdom were voiced by the *Indian Opinion*. Launched in 1904, the newspaper circulated Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and self-suffering («Sadagraha»), a theory that was inspired by his reading of Shelley mediated by Henry Stephen Salts [Ashe 1968, pp. 31-33]. With the Representation of Natives Act 1936 restricting franchise for black voters, and already hinting at the institutionalisation of Apartheid in 1948, civil resistance and endurance shaped the poetic message of the Zulu writer H.I.E. Dhlomo, whose Romantic diction was not devoid of concerns for political intervention. The undated essay «"The House of Bread": Poet versus Politician» illuminates Dhlomo's progressive ideas: «More courageous and wiser at time it is to live without attaining your ideals and applying your beliefs. Plato knew that his cherished Republic was not practicable but idealistic, and did not insist upon its immediate realization» [Dhlomo 1997, p. 76]. In addition to the reference to Plato, his debt to Shelley's progressivism is manifest not only because of the abundant allusions to the poet in works such as *Valley of a Thousand Hills* (1941) [Canani 2021]. This is also clear in Dhlomo's commitment to writing as a means to contribute to the development of a new South African nation through literature [Iannaccaro 2021, p. 226]. Such a political claim recalls Shelley's conception of the «true patriot» in *A Philosophical View of Reform*, but it also brings to mind his statement in *A Defence of Poetry* (1821): «The most unfailing herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution, is Poetry» [Shelley 2002, p. 535]. Shelley's sustainable approach to democracy did target futurity, well beyond the aristocratic circles he hoped to reach with *Queen Mab*.

Bibliography

Anselmo, A. (2021): «Reading Peterloo as Social Practice: The Lexical Representation of Social Actors in Three London-based Papers», in *The Keats-Shelley Review*, n. 3, vol. 35, pp. 169-187.

Ashe, G. (1968): *Gandhi: A Biography,* London, Stein and Day.

Behrendt, S. (2008): «The History of Shelley Editions in English», in S. Schmid and M. Rossington, eds, *The Reception of P. B. Shelley in Europe*, London and New York, Continuum, pp. 9-25.

Bennet, A. (1999): *Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Canani, M. (2021): «Romantic Polyphony in H.I.E. Dhlomo's *Valley of a Thousand Hills*», in *Thinking out of the Box in Literary and Cultural Studies*, R. Coronato, M. Parlati and A. Petrina eds., Padova, Padova University Press, pp. 243-264.

Chandler, J. (1999): *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

Crisafulli, L. M. (1999): *La realtà del desiderio. Saggi morali, teoria estetica e prosa politica in P. B. Shelley*, Napoli, Liguori.
— (2021): «P. B. Shelley's *The Mask of Anarchy* between Ethics and Politics», in *The Keats-Shelley Review*, n. 3, vol. 35, pp. 125-137.
Dancygier, V. (2012): «Negation, Stance Verbs, and Intersubjectivity», in B. Dancygier and E. Sweetser, eds, *Viewpoint in Language: A Multimodal Perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 69-93.
Dhlomo, H. I .E. (1997): «"The House of Bread": Poet versus Politician», in *English in Africa*, n. 4, vol. 2, pp. 73-76.
Duffy, C. (2003): «Revolution or Reaction? Shelley's *Assassins* and the Politics of Necessity», in *Keats-Shelley Journal*, vol. 52, pp. 77-93.
— (2009): «"They will not read it, but their sons & daughters may": Judging Percy Shelley's *Queen Mab* (1813) in the Nineteenth Century», in J. Gregory, D. J. R. Grey and A. Bautz, eds, *Judgment in the Victorian Age*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, pp. 24-260.
Eliot, G. (2003): *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*, ed. R. Ashton, London, Penguin.
Encyclopædia Britannica (2021): «Sustainability Summary», https://www.britannica.com/summary/sustainability [last accessed 16/07/2024].
Engels, F. (1999): *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, ed. D. McLelland, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Fairclough, N. (2003): *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, London and New York, Routledge.
Foucault, M. (1972): *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London, Tavistock.
Franta, A. (2007): *Romanticism and the Rise of the Mass Public*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Harrington, L. M. B. (2016): «Sustainability Theory and Conceptual Considerations: A Review of Key Ideas for Sustainability, and the Rural Context», in *Papers in Applied Geography*, n. 4, vol. 2, pp. 365-382.
Iannaccaro, G. (2021): «The Teacher and the Bard: Herbert Dhlomo's Historical Drama», in R. Coronato, M. Parlati and A. Petrina, eds, *Thinking out of the Box in Literary and Cultural Studies*, Padova, Padova University Press, pp. 225-242.
Kloppenberg, J. T. (1986): *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920*, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Krieger, J., ed. (2001): *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, 2nd edn., Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Lewes, G. H. (1841): «The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Moxon, 1839», in *The Westminster Review*, vol. xxxv, January-April 1841, pp. 303-344.
Mieszkowski, J. (2022): «Shelley's Wars, Burke's Revolutions», in *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, n. 1, vol. 20, pp. 105-120.
Mills, S. (2004): *Discourse, London and New York*, Routledge.

O'Brien, P. (2002): *Shelley and Revolutionary Ireland*, London, Redwords.
Poole, R. (2019): *Peterloo: The English Uprising*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Scrivener M. H. (1982): *Radical Shelley: The Philosophical Anarchism and Utopian Thought of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
— (2013): «Politics, Protest, and Social Reform: Irish Pamphlets, Notes to *Queen Mab*, *Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, *A Philosophical View of Reform*», in M. O'Neill and A. Howe, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 163-176.
Shelley, P. B. (1920): *A Philosophical View of Reform*, ed. by T. W. Rolleston, London, Humphrey Milford / Oxford University Press.
— (1964): *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by F. L. Jones, 2 vols, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
— (1993): *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by E. B. Murray, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
— (2002): *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, eds D. H. Reiman, N. Freistat, New York and London, Norton & Company.
— (2014a): *The Poems of Shelley. Volume One*: *1814-1817*, eds G. Matthews, K. Everest, Abingdon and New York, Routledge.
— (2014b): *The Poems of Shelley. Volume Three*: *1819-1820*, eds J. Donovan, C. Duffy, K. Everest and M. Rossington, Abingdon and New York, Routledge.
UN (1987): *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*, https://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf [last accessed 19/06/2024].
van Leeuwen, T. (2008): *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Waterloo Discourses: The Language of War in Newspapers

Abstract

Waterloo brought an end to the French Wars, "unprecedented in their scale and impact on British society" [Ramsey 2006, p. 117]. More than that, Waterloo was news. [Cathcart 2015, p. 19-20]. This article draws on both the unprecedentedness and the news quality of Waterloo to explore its construal [Fairclough 2003] in the coeval press. To that effect, press texts dating from the immediate aftermath of Waterloo (22 June 1815) are collected aiming to account for first reactions. The corpus is then digitized and analysed using LancsBox. Two research questions are presented and, subsequently, operationalized drawing up a list of potentially relevant lexical words whose quantitative and qualitative presence in the corpus is verified and assessed [McEnery and Hardie 2012, McEnery and Brezina 2019]. The corpus is further analysed using social actor theory [van Leeuwen 2008] to address the research questions.

Anna Anselmo

The Napoleonic Wars slowly effected a metamorphosis in conceptualisations of conflict: between 1793 and 1815, «the displacement of fighting onto foreign lands and waters meant that the immediate activity of war, "the activity of reciprocal injuring," remained for the most part outside the visual experience of the English» [Favret 1994, p. 539]. A consequence of this was the proliferation of written war accounts, what Favret calls «a paper shield» [1994, p. 539]. Waterloo was celebrated and construed[1] [Fairclough 2003] through the medium of the press [Keirstead and Demoor 2016, p. 447]. Jenny Uglow [2015] stresses how important the press was in the formation of national public opinion on Britain's international engagements: «Men and women interested in politics and the progress of the war devoured papers,

[1] Norman Fairclough defines construal as a process that is reliant on texts, on our ability to represent and imagine reality through semiosis [2003, p. 8]; as a process, construal is to be separated from construction in that it does not involve a direct effect on reality through material processes, and may, in fact, be entirely different from them.

pamphlets, and monthly and quarterly journals, discussing them in the book clubs that met in many towns» [Uglow 2015, p. 8].

It is the aim of the present article to investigate the reception of Waterloo in London-based daily newspapers in the immediate aftermath of battle. This is a preliminary foray into using applied linguistics for studying press texts surrounding Waterloo; consequently, a small corpus has been drawn up, which consists of newspaper articles published on 22 June 1815, straight after news of the battle reached London. The article consists of several sections: firstly, research questions and methodology are laid out; secondly, a concise critical historical background to Waterloo is offered; thirdly, the corpus and its analysis are presented; lastly, conclusions are drawn.

Research Questions and Methodology

This article tackles the following research questions:

1. What is the immediate reaction to Waterloo as evidenced in London-based daily newspapers dated 22 June 1815?
2. Based on the texts above, what is the construal of Waterloo [Fairclough 2003] and what are the social actors connected with the social practices of battle, victory, defeat and loss [van Leeuwen 2008]?

The methodology employed to address these research questions is Theo van Leeuwen's social actor theory. In particular, van Leeuwen's *Discourse and Practice* [2008] offers a theoretical framework that supports the textual construal of social actors and social action in this corpus. Social actor theory not only facilitates uncovering the interplay between language and power, but it also supports the identification of the discursive frames [Lakoff and Johnson 2003] that lie at the core of textual construals of facts and events.

Van Leeuwen presents discourse as recontextualised social practice [van Leeuwen 2008, p. 3]. He relies on Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation [1986] to argue that «all discourses recontextualize social practices, and that all knowledge is, therefore, ultimately grounded in practice [...]» [van Leeuwen 2008, p. 6]. In addition, van Leeuwen connects Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation to Foucauldian discourses, i.e., «context-specific frameworks for making sense of things» [van Leeuwen 2014, p. 138]. Since discourses are social tools for understanding social practices, they are «used as resources for representing social practices in text» [van Leeuwen 2008, p. 6]. Van Leeuwen claims that «all texts, all representations of the world and what is going on in it, however abstract, should be interpreted as representations of social practices» [van Leeuwen 2008, p. 5]; furthermore, he analyses «texts for the way they draw on, and transform, social practices» [van Leeuwen 2008, p. 5].

Two of his foci are the representation of social actors and social action, respectively. Social actors are defined as the participants in social practices [van Leeuwen 2008, p. 23], and the goal is understanding how they are represented in English by drawing not only on grammatical categories, but on a sociosemantic inventory of analytical categories. In other words, van Leeuwen is interested in how sociological categories (i.e., agency) are lexicalised in English, and to that end, mere grammatical realisations (i.e., nominalisation or passive agent deletion) prove to be insufficient. Secondly, van Leeuwen discusses the representation of social action by using sociosemantic categories as they relate to specific rhetorical and grammatical realisations, with the aim of «sketching an outline of a sociological "grammar" of the representation of social action» [van Leeuwen 2008, p. 56]. His analytical categories of social action draw on Halliday and Matthiessen's functional grammar [2014] and their discussion of processes (material, verbal, existential, mental, etc.).

Social actor theory is employed below in order to identify textual construals of battle, victory, defeat and loss, intended as social practices, and as perceived and represented by London-based newspapers. The aim is to assess to what extent political bias affects the construal of Waterloo as an event [Zizek 2014].

Waterloo: History and Newsworthiness

The Battle of Waterloo, fought on 18 June 1815, ended 23 consecutive years of recurrent warfare between France and the other powers of Europe. The battle took place 3 miles south of Waterloo village in Belgium, where «a multinational allied army composed of 6 different nationalities (British, Belgians, Hanoverians, Brunswickers, Dutch, and Prussians), led by an English general, Wellington, and a Prussian, Blucher» [Seaton 1999, p. 132] engaged in a daylong battle against the French. The battle culminated in Bonaparte's defeat and, ultimately, his exile to Saint Helena. Wellington's forces initially struggled, but were able to hold their defensive positions. Late in the day of 18 June 1815, as the Prussian reinforcements arrived, the tide turned, Bonaparte's army was overwhelmed, and forced into retreat.

When the carnage ended, stakeholders in the conflict were slowly informed: Louis XVIII, for instance, was waiting for news in Ghent; governance in London anticipated victory and expected to receive an official dispatch from the commanding officer at the scene, as was military custom [Cathcart 2015, p. 25]. «Dispatches were rarely brief since they were not only a medium of news but an official record and even a first draft of history» [Cathcart 2015, p. 26]. So it was only the day after Waterloo, 19 June, that the Duke of Wellington dispatched Major Henry Percy with the official report of the Allied victory.

The news undertook an adventurous journey to London including couriers on horseback, ships, and horse-drawn carriages. On June 19, Major Percy left

the battlefield, and he landed at Broadstairs, Kent, on the evening of June 21. He raced to London by coach, reaching the capital late on the same day, and delivered the news directly to the War Office in Whitehall, where he arrived at around 11 pm. The information spread rapidly through government circles, and by midnight, prominent politicians, military leaders, and aristocrats in London were aware of the triumph. As Percy arrived, many of the leading figures of London, including Lord Castlereagh, were attending a victory banquet. Percy dramatically entered the banquet and presented the captured French eagles (standards) and flags. This dramatic gesture heightened the excitement, and news spread even faster as guests left the banquet and shared the news throughout the city. By the morning of June 22, newspapers celebrated the news of the victory.

Slavoj Žižek provisionally defines an event as «an effect that seems to exceed its causes» [Žižek 2014, p. 3], i.e., an effect that cannot be fully accounted for by observing its immediate or distant causes. Waterloo matches the definition, in that not only was it something out of joint, a rupture in the flow of a 23-year-old war [Žižek 2014, p. 2], but it was also decisive in altering the geopolitical state of things and leading European geopolitics into new scenarios. It propelled further events into being. Yet Waterloo – as the Napoleonic Wars before it – was not merely an 'event' in the here and now, it was also very much a part of a narrative; in its immediate aftermath it was the result of mediation and of the transformative role that any medium has on the communication of facts and events [Moschini and Sindoni 2022, p. 1]. It was thus a political event – to the extent that it had political effects – but it was also a narrative that was spun, a language event that was construed and shared in the public sphere, thereby re-creating the event itself in public perception, and obfuscating the stark reality of war as the killing and maiming of human bodies [De Groote 2017, 404].

News of Waterloo was the definitive component to the «paper shield» [Favret 1994, p. 539] – including newspaper accounts, reports, memoirs, songs, and poems – raised against the destruction of war. In other words, the displacement of fighting on foreign lands not only caused war to remain «outside the visual experience» [Favret 1994, p. 539] of the British, but it also signified an increasing narrativization, and consequent alteration, of war [Favret 1994, p. 539]. Waterloo, as a thread woven into British history and national identity, was essentially a mediated experience, construed by the emergent media state [De Groote 2017, 400]. Waterloo exemplifies living *through* but not *in* a war [Favret 2010], it exemplifies war at a remove, and points to a view of history in which experience and mediation are inseparable [Rigney 2019, p. 122].

Reading news of Waterloo in newspapers published on 22 June 1815 sheds light on the press's construal of news items, as well as the systematic silencing, or reframing of state-mandated death.

The Newspaper Corpus: Texts and Rationale

This section presents a short historical introduction to London-based newspapers around 1815; it lists the selection criteria for daily newspapers to be included in the corpus, followed by a list of the selected papers; the specific type of articles and/or fragments within the papers which were included in the corpus.

Newspapers in 1815 were normally a single sheet of paper folded once to make four pages: the front and back pages contained advertisements; the news section (topical information and commentary) was on pages 2 and 3. Newspapers tended to be aggregators, i.e., they would not generate much original content, but rather assemble and publish information that was already available from other sources (e.g. French newspapers). Reporting, as we know it, had not yet evolved, so the core of a newspaper was the leading article, which was «the key to a paper's character» [Cathcart 2015, 55]. Usually written by the editor, it was meant to gatekeep and orient the reader's gaze. Foreign news was available through the Foreign Department of the Post Office, which provided papers with translated versions of foreign news.

For the present purpose, the British National Archive (BNA) was used as a source to identify London-based papers which reported news from Waterloo on 22 June 1815. The BNA lists nine newspapers: the *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Saint James's Chronicle*, the *Pilot (London)*, the *Morning Post*, the *Statesman (London)*, the *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, the *Sun (London)*, and the *Law Chronicle, Commercial and Bankruptcy Register*. Articles from *The Times* were retrieved from *The Times'* archive. Of these 10 newspapers, only the following are included in the corpus:

- *The Courier*
- *St. James's Chronicle*
- *The Morning Chronicle*
- *The Morning Post*
- *The Pilot (London)*
- *The Statesman*
- *The Sun*
- *The Times*

The *Law Chronicle, Commercial and Bankruptcy Register* was not included because it does not contain news of Waterloo. *The Public Ledger* was not included because, even though it contains long Napoleonic-war-related pieces, the writer(s) never confirms the victory of the Allied forces, and, while the arrival of Wellington's dispatch with Percy is mentioned, the *Public Ledger*'s writer is as yet unaware of its contents, and therefore limit themselves to accounts of the days leading up to Waterloo.

The history and political stances of the newspapers listed above were diverse: *the Courier* started out as a Whiggish newspaper (the owner, Daniel Stuart, had Whig connections that eventually helped him obtain a permanent ministerial position [Andrews 1869, III, p. 226; Fox Bourne 1887, I, pp. 274-276]). On the other hand, Stuart's business partner, Peter Street, was a Tory, the *Courier* thus slowly became a government mouthpiece. *The Morning Chronicle* was «the accepted organ of the orthodox Whigs» [Fox Bourne 1887, I, p. 279], its pages showed equal dislike of Tories and the radical ideas circulating at the time (e.g., Cobbett's *Political Register*, Hunt's *the Examiner*), and was a direct political competitor to the *Courier*. *The Morning Post* began publication in 1772, it was acquired by Daniel Stuart (the *Courier's* Daniel Stuart) in 1795, and its fortunes were revived. It remained a conservative newspaper, loyal to King and government. The *St. James's Chronicle* started as a Whig organ in 1761 and was responsible for setting the trend for layout, informational organisation, and typographic design [Morison 1932, pp. 150-151]. *The Pilot* was a short-lived evening paper, specialising in foreign affairs, East India intelligence, specifically. *The Sun* was a Tory evening paper, and it had an «evil reputation» [Fox Bourne 1887, I, p. 288]. It was set up in 1792 to advocate for the views of the Pitt government, especially regarding home and foreign policy. It was identified as «violently Tory» [Fox Bourne 1887, I, p. 355]. Savage suggests a different perspective by claiming that «*The Sun* has always supported the prerogative of his Majesty and the Constitution of the country, whoever might be the minister of the day» [Savage 1811, p. 18]. *The Statesman* was an evening paper, like *The Courier*, but unlike its competitor it had a bold, Whig stance. *The Times* was founded in 1785 and was published as a ½ penny broadsheet publishing commercial news and notices, and some scandal [Encyclopaedia Britannica 2024]. It was recognised as an independent paper, aiming for impartiality [Fox Bourne 1887, I, p. 262].

In order to address the research questions listed in the introduction, newspapers have been included in the corpus according to the following specifications:

- Only newspapers published on 22 June 1815 were included because the focus of this study is on first reactions to Waterloo and 21 June is when the news of Waterloo first broke out in London.
- Only daily papers were included. Tri-weekly and weekly papers, as well as periodicals were excluded since, by definition, they would not necessarily be timely and available to readers on 22 June 1815.
- Only newspapers published in London were included, because the Waterloo news reached London first, and because including the so-called provincial papers would call for critical and historical considerations beyond the scope of this article [see Hobbs 2009].

Within the papers listed, the articles selected dealt specifically with the battle of Waterloo. The plethora of articles containing first-hand testimony, autobiographical accounts, mere mentions of Bonaparte, French politics, or Louis XVIII's reaction to Bonaparte's demise, as well as summaries of parliamentary activities or cabinet activities in which Bonaparte is mentioned were disregarded, as they are not aligned with research question 1. Moreover, several newspapers report Wellington's dispatch either in part or in its entirety, as well as include official government statements delivering the news; these were not included in the corpus as they lie beyond the scope of identifying immediate reactions in the paper press.

The corpus is composed of 9101 tokens and 1874 lemmas. LancsBox X[2] was used for the analysis.

The Analysis

In order to identify social actors and analyse the ways in which they are construed in the corpus, emphasis is laid on war as a social practice constituted of several sub-practices, three of which are the focus of what follows: fighting, winning, and losing. These practices are identified in the corpus through the nouns «battle», «victory», «defeat» and «loss». These social practices are connected by a cause-effect relationship: battle leads to either victory or defeat, but it always entails loss; in other words, it is the immediate cause of victory, defeat or loss.

As a social practice, battle is processual, it implies a narrative with a beginning, a middle, and an end; it further implies several social actions, for instance, fighting, leading, giving orders, following orders, etc. as well as winning and losing. Victory, on the other hand, is the result of a process and, therefore, technically, a state of things; it is the state of «supremacy or superiority achieved as the result of armed conflict» [*OED* 2024]. This basic scenario is complexified by the reception and celebration of victory that happen in its aftermath. As a social practice, «victory» thus implies actions such as celebrating and mourning, for instance, and both are processual and entail duration, and thus cause victory itself to be understood as processual. «Defeat» is the opposite of «victory», it is either «The action or an act of defeating an army, enemy, etc., in a battle or war» or «an instance of being defeated in a battle or war» [*OED* 2024]. Similarly to victory, defeat is also processual in that some of its embedded social sub-practices entail duration; mourning, for instance. Loss, for its part, is less about the result of battle than it is about its inevitable

[2] LancsBox X is a corpus analysis tool developed at Lancaster University by Vaclav Brezina and William Platt. More information can be found here: https://lancsbox.lancs.ac.uk/.

consequences, such as destruction, ruin, and deprivation, both material and emotional. These consequences are both contingent and processual, as they develop in time. Such social practices and sub-practices imply the existence of at least three categories of social actors: the winners, the losers, and the dead, and while these categories are by no means unique, they are the focus of the present analysis.

In terms of the corpus, the keywords which operationalise the research questions [McEnery and Hardie 2012, McEnery and Brezina 2019] are, therefore, «battle», «victory», «defeat» and «loss». Their occurrence, as well as their significance in the corpus are investigated below.

The corpus contains 18 occurrences of the lemma "battle" (Fig. 1). The noun is often premodified with celebratory adjectives or with adjectives qualifying the battle as either unprecedented or violent, i.e., the battle is «grand» and «great» (2 occurrences), it is also «general» (as opposed to single battles engaging parts of the opposing armies); the battle is further «obstinate and sanguinary», «the most tremendous», or merely «sanguinary». There is one instance of postmodification in the following fragment: «battle very bloody». The noun does not occur in either *The Courier* or *the St. James's Chronicle*; it occurs twice in *the Morning Chronicle* (examples 1 and 2 in fig. 1 below), with a focus on «grand» and «most obstinate and sanguinary»; it occurs five times in *The Morning Post* (examples 3 to 7), generally used in either prepositional phrases (either preposition plus noun or preposition plus adjective plus noun, e.g., «in a general and most tremendous battle») or as subject or object of a clause. *The Pilot* lists five occurrences (examples 8 to 12), the noun is often used in prepositional phrases. *The Statesman* contains only one occurrence, «great battle» (example 13). *The Sun* contains four occurrences, and «battle» is generally used in prepositional phrases (examples 14 to 17). *The Times* presents one occurrence of «battle» («in a single battle», example 18).

«At first, Battle» does not appear to be connected to any social actors: the matters of who is fighting and who is getting hurt in such «sanguinary» conflict seem to have been linguistically backgrounded. In some examples, «battle» occurs as part of a prepositional phrase (a preposition plus a nominal group): pieces of French cannon are «captured in a single battle» (example 18); military actions have concluded «with the grand battle» (example 1); two of Napoleon's Eagles have been «captured in battle» (example 4); some news is reported by «an Eye-Witness of the Battle» (example 17). In this sense, «battle» is grammatically framed as adjunct, often as a circumstantial adjunct [Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, p. 424].

In examples 2 to 5 on the other hand, «battle» is grammatically connected with social actors included in social practices: in example 2 (from *the Morning Chronicle*), «battle» is part of a noun phrase and is the subject of the clause «a most obstinate and sanguinary battle took place»; while «battle» is here the

subject of the intransitive verb «take place», the previous clause mentions «the French line» advancing – a conventional metonymical reference to the French army. The co-text to battle therefore contains a reference to one of the sides who fought it. In example 14 (from *the Sun*), «battle» is part of a complement, «[…] the Sons of Britain should be brought man to man, and front to front in battle […]». This example foregrounds a connection between actual people (soldiers) and battle, acknowledging the existence of actors in battle and thus hinting at «the insistent materiality and contingency of war» [Ramsey and Gooch 2018, p. 229]. Example 15 (from *the Sun*) once again shows actors in direct grammatical connection with the materiality of battle: «[…] the valiant soldiers whom Wellington has inured to victory for the first time, tried the fortune of war in a pitched battle […]» (this example is to be discussed at length below in the section regarding the lemma «victory»). Here and in example 14, battle is further connected with the enemy, where the battle is waged against «the choicest troops in France», «the vaunted warriors of France». In both cases, the French army is passivated, represented as undergoing an activity, the battle in this case. [van Leeuwen 2008, p. 36]. Passivation happens through either subjection or beneficialisation [van Leeuwen 2008, p. 36]: the «troops» and the «warriors» of France are passivated by subjection, i.e., they are treated as objects in the representation of battle; this is textually realised thanks to cirmcumstantialisation through a prepositional phrase introduced by «against».

«Battle» is mostly written as objectivated. No material processes [Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, p. 215] appear to be connected to it (i.e. no hitting, shooting, slicing, cutting, no fighting): in the corpus, battle is not fought, but, rather, it happens.

Index	File	Left	Node	Right
1	Waterloo corp	to the 19th, concluding with the grand	Battle	of Sunday last, in which the French
2	Waterloo corp	line, and a most obstinate and sanguinary	battle	took place, which lasted without intermission the
3	Waterloo corp	overthrown, in a general and most tremendous	battle,	with the loss of the whole of
4	Waterloo corp	with two of Napoleon's Eagles captured in	battle,	which were displayed from the windows of
5	Waterloo corp	gives the following account of the great	battle	fought on the preceding Day:—He was on
6	Waterloo corp	transport. The Officer then said, that the	battle	of Sunday had been general along the
7	Waterloo corp	"Bonaparte has been completely beaten at Genappe—	battle	very bloody. General Pack is killed. Two
8	Waterloo corp	a most complete victory in a general	battle	on the 18th, with the results above
9	Waterloo corp	delay of the official accounts of the	battle	of the 16th is now explained, by
10	Waterloo corp	been sacrificed. In the course of the	battle,	Bonaparte was seen distinctly at the head
11	Waterloo corp	This is the anniversary day of the	battle	of Vittoria, and we hope that the
12	Waterloo corp	presume to claim the advantage in the	battle	of the 18th as he would undoubtedly
13	Waterloo corp	record of the particulars of the greet	battle	of the preceding day, when the British
14	Waterloo corp	to man, and front to front in	battle,	against the vaunted warriors of France, against
15	Waterloo corp	the fortune of war in a pitched	battle	against the choicest troops of France, commanded
16	Waterloo corp	with two of Napoleon's Eagles captured in	battle,	which were displayed from the windows of
17	Waterloo corp	Belgium. He was an Eye-Witness of the	Battle	of the 18th, and describes the Result
18	Waterloo corp	pieces of cannon captured in a single	battle,	put to the blush the boasting column-

Figure 1: Lancsbox results for the noun «battle»

«Victory» at Waterloo was actively incorporated into British national identity [Reynolds 2022]. The noun «victory» occurs 23 times in the corpus (Fig. 2) and is premodified by celebratory adjectives, such as «decisive», «most brilliant and complete», «grandest and most important», «greater», «splendid», «great and decisive», «glorious», «signal», «most complete», «most brilliant», with some repetition as is the case of the adjective «great».

Index	File	Left	Node	Right
1	Waterloo cor	under-rated its splendour and magnificence. A greater	victory	in point of glory, more vital to
2	Waterloo cor	readers from the details of this splendid	victory,	we have to state that that about
3	Waterloo cor	to announce the most brilliant and complete	Victory	ever obtained by the Duke pf Wellington,
4	Waterloo cor	the military chest, &c. And thus the	victory	was in every respect the most complete;
5	Waterloo cor	It is the grandest and most important	Victory	ever obtained. It supercedes the necessity of
6	Waterloo cor	forthwith congratulated his Majesty on the great	victory	just gained- "We have taken all the
7	Waterloo cor	he exclaimed, "and a great and decisive	victory	is ours". There was immediately the greatest
8	Waterloo cor	the transporting intelligence of a most complete	victory	in a general battle on the 18th,
9	Waterloo cor	the 18th, terminating, in the most brilliant	victory	ever achieved by the British arms. The
10	Waterloo cor	briefly sketched the glories of this signal	victory,—	we have now to turn to the
11	Waterloo cor	double salute in celebration of the glorious	victory	achieved by the Duke of Wellington over
12	Waterloo cor	be exhibited as proud trophies of the	victory;	but this exhibition is postponed till the
13	Waterloo cor	anticipation, in the news of the glorious	victory,	received last night. His observation, that no
14	Waterloo cor	ay June 22, 1815. Gazette Extraordinary. IMPORTANT	VICTORY	OBTAINED BY THE ALLIED ARMY IN BELGIUM
15	Waterloo cor	the joy excited by the tidings of	victory.	The loss, as his Grace says, appears
16	Waterloo cor	these veterans, overloaded with the wreaths of	victory;	and scarred with the seams of many
17	Waterloo cor	valiant soldiers whom Wellington has inured to	victory,	for the first time tried the fortune
18	Waterloo cor	the Earl of Uxbridge, June 18th. - DECISIVE	VICTORY.	Buonaparte leaving the 4th Corps to observe
19	Waterloo cor	may congratulate our Country on this Glorious	Victory,	as decisive of the Fate of Buonaparte
20	Waterloo cor	manifesting the greatest joy for a decisive	victory	gained by the Duke of WELLINGTON on
21	Waterloo cor	OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION OF A Great and Decisive	Victory.	At the period of our last publication,
22	Waterloo cor	of our illustrious Wellington but a (decided	victory	over Napoleon; who, whatever may be his
23	Waterloo cor	but are informed that they claim a	victory	for Bonaparte. If they do, they must

Figure 2: Lancsbox results for the noun «victory»

The noun occurs twice in *The Courier* in adjective plus noun constructions (examples 1 and 2); it occurs three times in the *St. James's Chronicle* (examples 21 to 23). Here victory is either «decisive» and «decided», or referred to the French («they (i.e., some French papers) claim a victory for Bonaparte»). In this instance the French papers are actors in a verbal process [see Halliday and Matthiessen 2014], they are genericised, i.e., referred to generically, and indetermined, that is, lumped together anonymously («some French papers») [van Leeuwen 2008, pp. 36, 39]. This serves the purpose of treating the papers' (and their writers') identities as irrelevant. On the other hand, Bonaparte is both individuated and nominated, as the unrivalled protagonist of European history and co-protagonist in the battle of Waterloo. «Victory» occurs three times in *the Morning Chronicle* (examples 3 to 5), with a focus on «grandest and most important», «most brilliant and complete» as premodifiers, and «the most complete» as a subject complement. *The Morning Post* presents two occurrences of «victory» (examples 6 and 7). The social actors involved are a gentleman in Ghent and King Louis XVIII of France; the gentleman addresses the king to congratulate him on the «great victory» and immediately resorts to the use of «we» (example 7) to represent the victory at Waterloo as a collective allied effort, even though the pronoun *per se* does not perform an identifying function, it does not identify the actual people involved in the victory, but rather presents a victorious ingroup implicitly pitted against a defeated outgroup, «them».

The Pilot lists six occurrences of «victory», the noun is premodified by celebratory adjectives, usually in the superlative form (examples 8 to 13). Two elements single out *the Pilot's* construal of victory: firstly, the nouns «victory» and «battle» are almost equally represented (six and five occurrences, respectively), which indicates equal emphasis laid on fighting and winning, as both can be expressive of national valour, military strength, and, consequently, international political ascendancy; secondly, «victory» is in direct connection with Wellington and Britain. Example 9, for instance, is part of a complex

sentence, in which «the transporting intelligence of a most complete victory» has as a distant syntactic referent, Major Percy transporting Wellington's dispatch, while the victory itself is ascribed to the British military, through the modality of epistemic necessity embodied by the clause «ever achieved by the British arms». Example 11 presents the same construction in which «victory» is postmodified by the clause «achieved by the Duke of Wellington». On the one hand, in examples 9 and 11 the social actors are activated in relation to «achieved», which introduces elliptical passive relative clauses [VAN LEEUWEN 2008]. In other words, both «the British arms» and «the Duke of Wellington» are construed as an «the active, dynamic force» [VAN LEEUWEN 2008, p. 32]. *The Pilot* appears to prefer nominalisations to processes – i.e., «battle» and «victory» instead of «fight*»[3], «fought», «win*», «won» - it nonetheless sociosemantically activates the celebrated heroes of national values and valour, Wellington and the British army.

The Statesman contains only two occurrences of «victory»: the first instance – example 14, «important victory obtained by the allied army» – replicates the construction in example 11 and activates «the Allied army»; the second instance – example 15 – can be read in its greater context: «The Duke of Wellington's dispatch is dated Waterloo, the 19th (Monday morning) and is devoted chiefly to the record of the particulars of the great battle of the preceding day, when the British arms attained the summit of glory, though at a price of blood which must greatly lessen the joy excited by the tidings of victory». The fragment juxtaposes the notion of victory and that of loss. Victory relates to joy, lessened by loss which is lexicalised as «the price of blood»: this frames both victory and loss as a transaction, whereby victory is purchased and the currency paid is blood. Blood, for its part, is a synecdoche representing the soldiers dead in battle, who are mentioned as a grammatically activated subject in a material clause, in which once again the direct object (the goal) is designated metaphorically as «the summit of glory», whereby «summit» (ascending to the peak of a mountain) is the source and «glory» the target.

The Sun contains four occurrences of «victory» (examples 16 to 19). Example 16 shows a similar pattern to some mentioned above, it connects victory – using the conventionalised expression of classical origin «the wreaths of victory» – to «the warriors of France». The example is meant to celebrate the Allied victory, by recognising the French enemies' superior experience as soldiers. In example 12, Wellington is sociosemantically and grammatically activated: he has «inured» soldiers «to victory»; this instance shows a connection between soldiers and victory, one which hinges on the semantics

[3] The asterisk indicates the way «fight» was spelled in LancsBox's search box, so as to retrieve all word forms of «fight», i.e. «fighter», «fighters», «fighting», etc. The same explanation relates to «win*».

of the verb «inure», i.e. «To bring (a person, etc.) by use, habit, or continual exercise to a certain condition or state of mind, to the endurance of a certain condition, to the following of a certain kind of life, etc.; to accustom, habituate» [*OED* 2024]. The verb «inure» presupposes a SVOC syntactical structure, example 17 in the corpus contains «inure» in a relative clause: «On that day, the valiant soldiers whom Wellington has inured to victory, for the first time tried the fortune of war […] ». Specifically, «inure» is used in an object relative clause, with the relative pronoun «whom» taking the place of the object of «inure», that is, «soldiers». Furthermore, «inure» is used with a semantically unexpected complement: if inuring someone to something means leading someone to acceptance and endurance of a specific condition or situation, «victory» is not what one would expect to have to be inured to. In this case, the semantic assumption is that victory, especially in the case of Waterloo, was hard won and the result of extreme hardship, risk, and fatigue. The social actors here, British soldiers and Wellington are activated. One further actor in the construal of victory is Great Britain itself: in example 14, the writer claims that «we may congratulate our Country on this Glorious Victory».

The Times presents one occurrence of «victory» (example 20), which in syntactically in line with the examples illustrated above: «victory» is post-modified by an elliptical defining relative clause – i.e., «gained by the Duke of Wellington».

The lemma «defeat» occurs 4 times, 3 of which are headlines (see Fig. 3): «Complete Defeat of Buonaparte» (twice) and «Total Defeat of Buonaparte». Premodifying adjectives highlight the definitiveness of «defeat», these are «total», and «complete». *The Courier* counts one occurrence as a headline (example 1); *the Morning Chronicle* counts one (example 4), so do *the Pilot* (example 3), and *the Sun* (example 2); the *St. James's Chronicle*, *the Morning Post*, *the Statesman*, and *the Times* count zero occurrences. The social actor involved in the four occurrences of «defeat» is, predictably, Bonaparte:[4] three times Bonaparte is used as part of the noun phrase «defeat of Bonaparte»; he is once present in the text in example 3 as a possessive adjective («his») premodifying «defeat».

Index	File	Left	Node	Right
1	Waterloo cor	THE courier. THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 22. COMPLETE	DEFEaT	of BUONAPARTE. It is confirmed,—Nay, the glorious
2	Waterloo cor	O N: THURSDAY, June 22, 1815 TOTAL	DEFEAT	of BONAPARTE. We stop the press to
3	Waterloo cor	he would undoubtedly have done if his	defeat	was not equally undeniable and signal. THE
4	Waterloo cor	AUDEAT? LONDON. THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 1815, TOTAL	DEFEAT	OF BUONAPARTE. We have more than once

Figure 3: Lancsbox results for the lemma «defeat»

[4] The corpus contains 38 occurrences of "French" (either noun or adjective). The noun/adjective are connected with fighting (even though not with the noun "battle"), but not syntactically and grammatically with «defeat».

The lemma «loss» occurs 14 times in the corpus (see Fig. 4). *The Courier* counts no occurrences; *the Morning Chronicle* counts two (examples 1 and 2); *the Pilot* counts three (examples 6 to 8); *the Sun* contains two (examples 10 and 11), so does the *St. James's Chronicle* (examples 13 and 14); *the Morning Post* contains three occurrences (examples 3 to 5); and both *the Statesman* and *the Times* contain one occurrence (example 9 and 12, respectively).

«Loss» occurs as part of the prepositional phrase «with the loss of» in 7 occurrences out of the total 14; 3 of these types of occurrences are found in *the Morning Post* (examples 3 to 5). Instances of «with the loss of» (examples 1, 3 to 5, 8, 10 and 13) present a direct grammatical connection with the loss of either artillery or cannon: «with the loss of one hundred and fifty pieces of cannon» (examples 5 and 8); «with the loss of two hundred and ten pieces of cannon» (examples 1, 4, and 13). These numbers were remarkable news as they offered an objective measure of Bonaparte's defeat. In the *Morning Post*, Bonaparte is the social actor mentioned as sustaining «the loss of the whole of his artillery» (example 3); he is also referred to as a «Tyrant» (example 4) and it is the «Tyrant's army» that is the object of a «complete overthrow», actualised by, again, losing cannon and artillery.

But «loss» is also connected with death. In example 14 (one of two occurrences in the *St. James's Chronicle*), «loss» relates to the death on the field of the Duke of Brunswick: «We presume a Court mourning will he ordered for the Duke of Brunswick, and that a general observance of it will mark the sympathy of the British people in the loss which the family of their Sovereign has sustained». The social actors involved in the loss are «the British people» and the king's family. In this case, «loss» is followed by a defining object relative clause indicating who «sustained» the loss, i.e., the king and his family. The «British people» are genericised and assimilated through collectivisation, through the use of the definite article, the nationality adjective and the noun «people»; the sociosemantic category of assimilation through collectivisation aims at textually construing a «homogenous, consensual group» [van Leeuwen 2008, p. 39]. In example 2 (from *the Morning Chronicle*), «loss» is again used euphemistically to represent deceased soldiers; loss is qualified by the hyperbolic adjective «immense». That the loss is immense is reported as a direct attribution to Wellington through reported speech, as a form of summary or paraphrase. Example 9 from *the Statesman* presents a very similar wording: «the loss, as his Grace says, appears to be, indeed, immense». Here, Wellington is nominated through titulation, in the form of honorification [van Leeuwen 2008, p. 41].

Occurrences of «loss» in *The Pilot* point to the use of «loss» as a euphemistic reference to dead soldiers, i.e., loss of life [van Leeuwen 2008, p. 32]. While one example refers to the French army losing 150 pieces of cannon (example 8), the remaining two examples (6 and 7) are part of the same sentence and of-

fer numbers and a comparison: numbers («10,700 killed and wounded») refer to the British army; the definite quantifier functioning as the head of this nominal group points to the sociosemantic category of aggregation. Aggregation is intended to use numbers perceived as fact-reporting to sometimes manufacture public opinion: the huge number of British dead and wounded was sure to incite the readers' emotional reactions and investment in the grand finale to the Napoleonic wars. The French army are here designated as «the enemy», another instance of assimilation through collectivisation: their loss, *the Pilot*'s journalist writes is «far greater».

Example 11 is from *The Sun*: «Report states their loss at 40,000 men hors de combat». «Loss» is postmodified by a nominal group headed by a definite quantifier, «40,000 men». This is a further example of assimilation through aggregation. This time numbers concern French losses at Waterloo and are instrumental in celebrating the Allied victory, based on the losses they were able to inflict.

1	Waterloo cor|	the French were completely routed, with the	loss	of Two Hundred and Ten Pieces of
2	Waterloo cor|	cost. The Duke of Wellington says the	loss	is immense, owing to the desperation of
3	Waterloo cor|	general and most tremendous battle, with the	loss	of the whole of his artillery; while
4	Waterloo cor|	overthrow of the Tyrant's army, with the	loss	of two hundred and ten pieces of
5	Waterloo cor|	OVERTHROW OF THE ENEMY'S ARMY, with the	loss	of One Hundred and Fifty pieces of
6	Waterloo cor|	ages— esto perpetua. FURTHER PARTICULARS. The total	loss	of the allied army is estimated, we
7	Waterloo cor|	at 10,700 killed and wounded; the enemy's	loss	far greater. There is no estimate of
8	Waterloo cor|	overthrow of the enemy's army, with the	loss	of 150 pieces of cannon, and two
9	Waterloo cor|	excited by the tidings of victory. The	loss,	as his Grace says, appears to be,
10	Waterloo cor|	discontinue bis operations, and what with the	loss	of Artillery, which the Rebels can so
11	Waterloo cor|	Ruin ofThe French Army. Report states their	loss	at 40,000 men hors de combat. Mr.
12	Waterloo cor|	cannon! When, where, or how is this	loss	to be repaired? Besides, what has become
13	Waterloo cor|	complete overthrow of Bonaparte's Army, with the	loss	of two hundred and ten pieces of
14	Waterloo cor|	sympathy of the British people in the	loss	which the family of their Sovereign has

Figure 4: Lancsbox results for the lemma «loss»

Discussion and Conclusion

Waterloo became ubiquitous and multi-layered in British culture between 1815 and Wellington's death in 1852. First reactions on 22 June 1815 were the beginning of a process of celebration and appropriation of Bonaparte's end at the hands of the Allied army.

The corpus selected for analysis shows stereotypical social actors – Wellington, Bonaparte, Percy, the French and British armies among others. The focus of this article is on the social practices of fighting, winning, and losing; these practices were operationalized through a set of keywords – «battle», «victory», «defeat», and «loss» – whose presence in the present corpus was assessed. The aim was to assess how the social practices mentioned above were construed and whether they were connected to specific social actors or not.

The analysis shows that in the corpus Napoleon's defeat is celebrated across the board, regardless of the newspapers' political allegiance. This is

partly due to the very nature of the corpus: the eight newspapers analysed were either Tory (or ultra-Tory, like *the Courier* or *the Sun*) or Whig (or they claimed impartiality like *The Times*), some radical and dissenting papers were weekly or periodical. Further analysis including more papers accounting for the more varied spectrum of British politics at the time may yield further results.

«Battle» is shown to mostly occur as part of prepositional phrases; it is sometimes connected with the French and British armies. *The Sun*, an intensely Tory newspaper, contains four occurrences of the noun «battle», and, while both *the Pilot* and *the Morning Post* contain five each, *the Sun* contains the most occurrences highlighting the connection between battle and soldiers: on the one hand, phrases such as «valiant soldiers» and «the Sons of Britain», typical of ultra-patriotic vocabulary, on the other, references to «the choicest troops» and «the vaunted warriors» of France, useful in emphasising the merit of the Allied victory over Napoleon's army, portrayed as experienced, fierce («choicest», «warriors»), celebrated («vaunted»).

«Victory» occurs 23 times in the corpus and is mostly predictably celebrated through the use of premodifying adjectives. *The Pilot* presents the most occurrences (six) of «victory» and presents an almost equal number of occurrences of «battle» (five): this is an interesting indication of a preference for nominalisations of processes rather than processes themselves; in fact, the verbs «fight» and «win» and their various verb forms do not occur in *the Sun* (except for a single occurrence of «fought»). The data point in the same direction in the whole corpus: neither «win» nor its other verb forms appear in the corpus; «fight» only appears three times as «fighting», twice as a noun and once as a verb introducing a non-finite subordinate clause. One of the occurrences in *The Statesman* shows the deployment of a metaphorical frame intended to conceptualise victory as a transaction that entails payment through blood, which is worthy of note.

«Defeat» occurs only four times, three of which are in headlines. «Loss» occurs 14 times in the corpus, and while half of them is the prepositional phrase «with the loss of», a couple of occurrences are connected with loss of life, especially in *The Pilot* and in *the Sun*. Emphasis is laid on the spoils of the battle: the startling number of cannons, Bonaparte's baggage, the amount of artillery; but also, on the number of dead among the French, and on dead and wounded among the English. The use of assimilation (aggregation, in particular) in this context, serves the purpose of celebrating a momentous victory by using figures and numbers referring to a genericized enemy, thus amplifying British success [van Leeuwen 2008, p. 32]. For the sake of completion, many newspapers in the corpus reported Wellington's dispatch in its entirety, which contained a full list of officer casualties and allowed for stronger focus on British casualties.

Bibliography

Andrews, A. (1869): *The Newspaper Press*, 3 vols. London, E. W. Allen.

Cathcart, B. (2015): *The News from Waterloo: the Race to Tell Britain of Wellington's Victory*, London, Faber & Faber.

De Groote, B. (2017): «"A Revolution in the Republic of Letters": The News from Waterloo and the Post-Waterloo Media State», in *Studies in Romanticism*, n. 3, vol. 56, pp. 399-418.

Encyclopaedia Britannica (2024): «The Times», https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Times [last accessed 21/11/2024].

Fairclough, N (2003): *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge.

Favret, M. A. (1994): «Coming Home: The Public Spaces of Romantic War». In *Studies in Romanticism*, n. 4, vol. 33, pp. 539-548.

— (2010): *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Fox Bourne, H. R. (1887): *English Newspapers, Chapters in the History of Journalism*, 2 vols., London, Chatto.

Halliday, M. A. K., Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014): *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar* (Fourth Edition), Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge.

Hobbs, A. (2009): «When the Provincial Press was the National Press (c.1836-c.1900)». In *The International Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, n. 1, vol. 5, pp. 16-43.

Keirstead, C. M., Demoor, M. (2015): «Introduction: Waterloo and Its Afterlife in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical and Newspaper Press», in *Victorian Periodicals Review*, n. 4, vol. 48, pp. 447-450.

Lakoff, G., Johnson, M. (2003): *Metaphors We Live by*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

McEnery, T., Brezina, V. (2022): *Fundamental Principles of Corpus Linguistics* (1st ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

— and Hardie, A. (2012): *Corpus Linguistics: Method, Theory and Practice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Morison, S. (1932): *The English Newspaper, Some Account of the Physical Developments of Journals Printed in London between 1622 and the Present Day*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Moschini, I., Sindoni, M. G., eds (2022): *Mediation and Multimodal Meaning Making in Digital Environments*, Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge.

The Oxford English Dictionary: www.oed.com

Ramsey, N. (2006): «Romanticism and War», in *Literature Compass*, *3*(2), pp. 117-126.

— and Gooch, J. (2018): «Introduction: Mediating War», in *Romanticism*, n. 3, vol. 24, pp. 229-230. https://doi.org/10.3366/rom.2018.0382

Reynolds, L. (2022): *Who Owned Waterloo?: Battle, Memory, and Myth in British History, 1815-1852* (1st ed.), Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Rigney, A. (2019): «Reframing Waterloo: Memory, Mediation, Experience», in S. Palmié, C. Stewart, eds, *The Varieties of Historical Experience*, London and New York, Routledge, pp. 121-139.
Savage, J. (1811): *An Account of the London Daily Newspapers*, London, Gale and Curtis.
Seaton, A. V. (1999): «War and Thanatourism: Waterloo 1815–1914», in *Annals of Tourism Research*, n. 1, vol. 26, pp. 130-158.
Uglow, J. S. (2014): *In These Times: living in Britain through Napoleon's Wars, 1793-1815*, London, Faber and Faber.
Van Leeuwen, T. (2008): *Discourse and Practice*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Žižek, S. (2014): *Event: A Philosophical Journey through a Concept*. Melville House.

Discourses of War: from Napoleon's Addresses to the Ideational Peace/War Dichotomy. A Corpus-based Analysis

Abstract

This paper is part of a larger study focusing on how conflict discourse is enacted in different genres, both old and modern, such as memoirs, diaries, proclamations, novels, newspapers articles, tweets, Facebook posts. Specifically, the study aims at providing a discursive representation of *war* across different centuries (i.e., from the 18th century through contemporary times). Discourses are «ways of representing aspects of the world» [Fairclough 2003, p. 124], therefore different discourses from different social actors or groups involve different perspectives on the world. World perspectives are realized by means of both verbal and non-verbal sign systems; these must not be considered as isolated, independent units but as networks of semantic relationships, e.g., collocations, metaphors and other tropes, speech acts and types of exchanges, within the same text or among more texts. On these grounds, this paper provides the findings of two case studies: a) the representation of the Napoleonic war through different forms of discourses, i.e., *hortatory* and *epideictic* discourses; and b) the building of conflict discourse in a diachronic perspective, focusing on the salience of the keywords *war* and *peace* as lexical and ideological elements that go beyond their declarative status [Tobia 2016]. Methodologically, the paper adopts the tools of discourse analysis [Fairclough 2003] and corpus-assisted discourse studies [Baker 2023]. The study is carried out on four corpora of texts, each representative of a different genre. Findings from the corpora demonstrate how orders of discourse that characterized war during the Napoleonic era and which characterize contemporary times are formed, thus providing different conflict narratives.

Gaetano Falco[1], Francesco Meledandri[2]

1. Introduction

The latest conflicts in Ukraine and in the Middle-East are evidence of what Mary Kaldor, in her volume *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* [Kaldor 2012], refers to as «new wars». Unlike the «old wars» of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which were fought

[1] Author of Sections 1., 2., 2.1., 3., 3.1., and 4.1.

[2] Author of Sections 3.2. and 4.2.

between nation-states, for geopolitical expansion or for ideological reasons, and consisted in capturing territory through military means, «New Wars» are conflicts that have emerged since the Cold War, such as the Balkan Wars in the 1990s and the current Syrian Civil War. They involve both state and non-state actors, e.g., regular armed forces, private security contractors, mercenaries, jihadists, warlords, paramilitaries, etc. and are frequently driven by tribal, religious, or ethnic identity motivations. They are characterized by the use of irregular warfare tactics, such as terrorism and guerrilla warfare, as well as advanced technology. They are fought less for territorial conquest and more for gaining control over financial and economic resources. Their impact is global and, as such, «New Wars» tend to destabilize geographical, political and economic stability. If the Cold War can be considered as the turning point towards the «New Wars», an important watershed in the history of warfare is represented by the Napoleonic age. For some scholars, the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) «are the last great wars fought without modern technology, and so the last fought with early modern tactics» [Broers 2011, p. 64]. For other scholars, they represent the dawn of «total war» [Bell 2007] as they involved the mobilization of entire populations, economies and other resources, or «the first people's war» [Kaldor 2012, p. 23], as they involved the *levée en masse*, and forms of modern warfare, some sort of a «military revolution» in Europe that «raised, trained, equipped and employed armies» [Rothenberg 1999, p. 18].

Many scholars have investigated the Napoleonic Wars from the perspective of linguistics, discourse analysis and cultural studies. Engberg and Pedersen [2016] have considered the impact of war discourse on cultural perceptions and literary narratives. Bonura [2012] has examined how Napoleonic memory was used by the French officer corps to shape military discourse and identity during the Bourbon Restoration. Roberts [2015] has delved into Napoleon's extensive correspondence, providing insights into how Napoleon used language to communicate his strategies, political ideas, and personal thoughts; Zamoyski [2018], in turn, has explored Napoleon's use of language to shape his public image and legitimize his rule. As early as 1935, Coulaincourt provided first-hand accounts of Napoleon's language and directives during his Russian campaign. Schroeder [1994] has studied how the Napoleonic Code exerted a profound influence on the legal and administrative systems of many European countries. The language of war is a subject that has drawn the attention of scholars from various research areas, ranging from socio-semiotic theory [Lukin 2018] to pragmatics [Kampf 2013; Mestre-Mestre 2022; Chiluwa and Ruzaite 2024]; from corpus linguistics [Liu 2024; Lukin and García Marrugo 2024], to metaphor analysis [Flusberg et al. 2018; Sun 2010; Lule 2004].

In line with these studies, the research aim of the present paper is to investigate war discourses and to offer a representation of the language of war in different ages, adopting a corpus-based critical discourse analysis. In par-

ticular, the paper provides a study of the representation of the epideictic and hortatory discourses employed during the Napoleonic wars (Case Study 1) and an analysis of the conflict narratives (war vs. peace) in a diachronic linguistic perspective (Case Study 2). The paper is structured as follows. Section 2, after introducing the discourse of war, describes the epideictic and hortatory rhetoric used in Napoleon's war discourses, focusing on both literary and non-literary genres. Section 3 presents the methodology and findings for both case studies. Section 4 contains discussion of the results and concluding remarks.

2. Discourse(s) of War(s)

As remarked by Hodge, «war discourse refers to the use of language and social interaction as a mediating element» [Hodge 2015, p. 1]. As such, war discourse entails the adoption of related methodological approaches, such as linguistics, rhetoric and communication studies. There are some key elements in war discourse, ranging from 'call-to-arms' rhetoric, to the discursive construction of social identities, as well as the use of legitimating devices in language that underlie the exhortatory power of war language. Due to its complexity and multivocality, war language cannot be considered as entirely homogeneous and reducible to a clear-cut opposition between 'us' and 'them' [Pankov et al. 2011] in the outbreak, conduct, and disputation of armed political conflict. It follows that various narratives and frames are used to shape the perception of war and peace as well as legitimizing their associated actions. For instance, political leaders adopt specific narratives to justify the war on terror, and different countries frame their military actions in such a way as to affect the public perception [Hodge 2013]. An important contribution to the study of war and peace discourse is brought by the special issue of the *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* on discourses of war and peace edited by Robert L. Ivie (2016), which collects interventions from various research fields, e.g., linguistics, rhetoric, and communication studies, showing «the artificiality of discourses of war» [Ivie 2016, p. 130]. A significant space in this issue is given to rhetoric.

Works on war rhetoric flourished particularly during great events in history. For instance, Gross and Aolain discuss the role of war rhetoric in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack [Gross and Aolain 2014]. They argue that, using the power of words, rhetoric shapes our thoughts and reality. Drawing on Vatz, they contend that «meaning is not discovered in situations, but *created* by rhetors» [Vatz 1973, p. 157]. Leaders use specific words and rhetorical strategies to influence decision-making and mobilize support [Gross and Aoláin 2014]; to inspire national unity and create feelings of empathy and determinations, using metaphors, imagery, parallelism and repetition [Oneț 2024]; to appeal to territoriality, patriotism and religious duty [Reid 1976]. Recent research on warfare rhetoric has also focused on the visual rhetoric of

war. Using the interplay between text and image, visual rhetoric contributes to disseminating anti-war messages [Roque 2008]; promoting propaganda, memorializing events, and shaping national identity and collective memory [Cooper and Holman 2008]; desensitizing the public to violence [Ohl 2015].

2.1 Discourses of war: the epideictic and hortatory rhetoric

Researchers in both literary and non-literary fields have devoted much attention to the use of rhetoric during the Napoleonic wars. Not only Napoleon but also his generals used speeches to spiritually and physically stir their troops before a battle, thus contributing to shaping pro-Napoleon public opinion and military morale. The admiration for Napoleon fed his generals' *memoirs* as well as much of the literary works and the media and propaganda of his time. All of them contributed to depicting him «as a 'protective hero', as 'saviour' and even 'father' of the people'» [Dwyer 2004, p. 393], or celebrated him «as a positive symbol of military and national greatness» that inspired America between 1800 and 1850 [Ehlers 2017].

In line with this background, this paper aims at discussing forms of epideictic and hortatory discourse both in Napoleon's proclamations and his generals' *memoirs*. In general, epideictic discourse, also known as the rhetoric of praise and blame, aims to celebrate, commemorate, or criticize individuals, events, or ideas. Hortatory discourse involves the rhetoric of exhortation; it aims at encouraging certain actions or behaviours. Over the last two centuries much research has focused on epideictic discourse more as a discursive function than as a rhetorical genre, whose main goal is persuasion [Beale 1978; Hauser 1999; Schandorf 2015; Kampf and Katriel 2016]. Interestingly, Schandorf sees epideictic discourse as the discourse which «establish(es) and reinforce(s) shared belief, primarily through the discourse of praise and blame»; the discourse that performs «the establishment or 'presencing' of collective consciousness» [Schandorf 2015, p. 3]. In short, epideictic discourse «can be identified with ideological discourse» [Schandorf 2015, p. 10] in which a significant role is played by Aristotle's distinctions between *ethos, pathos* and *logos*: epideictic discourse achieves its persuasive goal of enhancing *pathos* in the audience by appealing to the speakers' *ethos*, i.e., their own values and assumptions, their sense of identity, through the use of *logos*, i.e., language, which is an aspect of symbolic action. Owing to its ideological nature, epideictic discourse plays a significant role in war and political speeches [Condit 1985; Dow 1989; Murphy 1992; Vivian 2006; Bostdorff 2011; Slavíčková 2014]. An important contribution in this area of research comes from Kampf and Katriel [2016] who use epideictic rhetoric studies to argue about political condemnation and the discourse of moralization. Hortatory discourse, also known as «exhortative rhetoric», is a form of communication that aims to persuade or encourage an audience to take specific action or adopt a certain viewpoint. It is characterized

by a strong 'call to action', urging listeners or readers toward future behaviour or decision-making, by appealing to emotions, values, and logic. Unlike epideictic discourse, which centers on praise or blame in the present, hortatory discourse is future-oriented. At the pragmatic level, hortatory discourse uses direct language, such as imperatives in order to perform commands and requests. In the same way as epideictic discourse, hortatory discourse relies on *pathos*, as it evokes such feelings as patriotism, or moral duty; *ethos*, as speakers feature their credibility and moral standing; and *logos*, as speakers use facts, reasoning and evidence to support the need to take action. At a rhetorical level, hortatory discourse exploits devices such as repetition, parallelism, metaphors and other tropes to scaffold the message. It is used in a variety of context, specifically where a persuasive goal must be achieved. Following on from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, hortatory discourse has been largely discussed in various fields by Burke [1969], Searle [1969], McCroskey [2006], Fairclough [2003], and Oddo [2018].

3. Methodology and Findings

The two case studies presented in this paper were carried out using the methodology and tools of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies. Before going into details of each case study, it is fundamental to remark that the meaning of the terms *discourse* and *orders of discourse* as they are used in this paper is taken from Fairclough [2003].

> **Ways of representing aspects of the world**: the processes, relations and structure of the material world, the 'mental world' of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world. Particular aspects of the world may be represented differently, so we are generally in the position of having to consider the relationship between different discourses. **Different discourses are different perspectives on the world**, and they are associated with the different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in the world, their social and personal identities, and the social relationships in which they stand to other people [Fairclough 2003, p. 124].

World perspectives are linguistically realized by means of words, which must not be considered as isolated, independent lexical units but as networks of semantic relationships within the same text or between or among more texts, together with other linguistic, rhetorical and pragmatic devices, i.e. collocations (patterns of co-occurrence of words in texts); metaphors (lexical and grammatical), metonymies and other rhetorical tropes; speech acts and types of exchanges enacted in and outside texts by the author . Discourses are closely related as in the notion of *order of discourse*, whereby we mean not only the

semantic relationships that characterize discourses but also the network of social practices realized through genres and styles. In other words, the analysis of orders of discourse would involve the whole of both the verbal and non-verbal sign systems. This paper focuses on the verbal sign system only.

To achieve the research goals, four corpora were compiled, each representative of different typologies and genres. Corpora A, B and C are made up of documents relevant to the Napoleonic age. Corpus A includes Napoleon's proclamations and addresses (18,132 tokens) and 18th-19th century war speeches (5,441 tokens), totaling 23,573 tokens. Corpus B consists of French generals' *memoirs* (translated into English) (704,210 tokens). Corpus C a sub-corpus of Napoleonic fiction extracted from the 2020 Gutenberg project available on Sketch Engine (2,903,177,585 tokens). Corpus D is a corpus of war speeches and declarations of war ranging from the Napoleonic era to contemporary times, including sub-sections (Napoleonic addresses, 18th century, 19th century, WWI, WWII, contemporary speeches) (59,314 tokens).

3.1 Case Study 1

The aim of this section is to show how the Napoleonic hortatory and epideictic discourses of war rest on specific linguistic structures, including semantic relationships, collocations, metaphors and the speech acts enacted within and outside texts by various authors. This part of the research was carried out on Corpus A1, Corpus B and Corpus C. A list of keywords was extracted from the corpus of Napoleon's proclamations using the corpus of memoirs and diaries as a reference corpus.

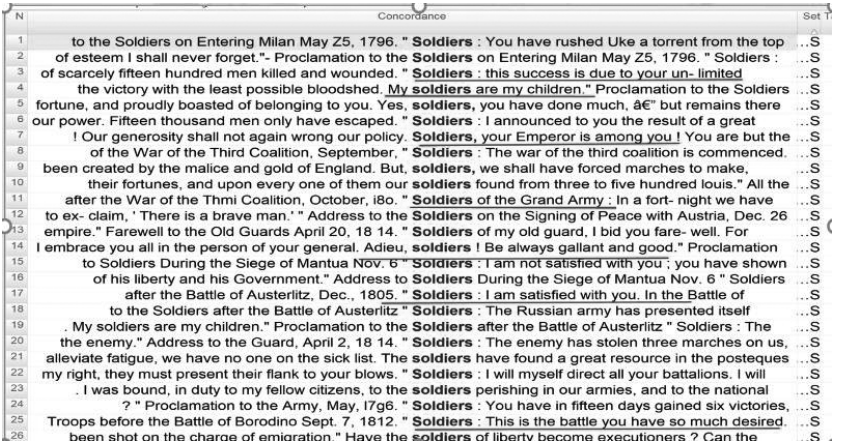
KeyWords

File Edit View Compute Settings Windows Help

N	Key word	Freq.	%	Texts	RC. Freq.	%	BIC	Log_L	Log_R	P
1	YOU	310	1,70	5	1.810	0,26	596,18	609,67	2,73	0,0000000000
2	YOUR	201	1,10	5	667	0,09	560,41	573,90	3,54	0,0000000000
3	HAVE	266	1,46	5	3.146	0,45	236,80	250,29	1,71	0,0000000000
4	SOLDIERS	89	0,49	5	478	0,07	173,10	186,59	2,85	0,0000000000
5	WILL	121	0,66	5	991	0,14	162,55	176,04	2,24	0,0000000000
6	PROCLAMATION	32	0,18	5	26		143,56	157,05	5,57	0,0000000000
7	SHALL	73	0,40	5	380	0,05	143,12	156,61	2,89	0,0000000000
8	PEOPLE	55	0,30	5	267	0,04	110,52	124,01	2,99	0,0000000000
9	HONOR	20	0,11	3	5		108,94	122,43	7,27	0,0000000000
10	HAS	77	0,42	5	591	0,08	105,92	119,41	2,33	0,0000000000
11	IS	145	0,80	5	1.880	0,27	105,75	119,24	1,58	0,0000000000
12	ADDRESS	24	0,13	5	19		105,08	118,57	5,61	0,0000000000
13	REPUBLIC	23	0,13	4	18		100,47	113,96	5,63	0,0000000000
14	ARE	97	0,53	5	980	0,14	98,48	111,97	1,94	0,0000000000
15	YOURSELVES	14	0,08	5	2		77,59	91,08	8,08	0,0000000000
16	ENEMIES	26	0,14	5	73	0,01	67,58	81,07	3,78	0,0000000000
17	GLORY	24	0,13	5	73	0,01	58,33	71,82	3,67	0,0000000000
18	INTRENCHMENTS	9	0,05	1	0		52,75	66,24	138,02	0,0000000000
19	MAJESTY	29	0,16	3	152	0,02	48,41	61,90	2,88	0,0000000000
20	LIBERTY	16	0,09	5	29		47,17	60,66	4,41	0,0000000000
21	LEGISLATIVE	9	0,05	3	1		46,30	59,79	8,44	0,0000000000
22	NATIONS	17	0,09	4	40		44,20	57,69	4,04	0,0000000000
23	ENGLAND	27	0,15	5	145	0,02	43,12	56,61	2,85	0,0000000000
24	PROSPERITY	13	0,07	4	16		43,11	56,60	4,97	0,0000000000
25	RIGHTS	14	0,08	3	23		41,64	55,13	4,56	0,0000000000
26	ITS	54	0,30	5	610	0,09	40,61	54,10	1,77	0,0000000000
27	PEACE	34	0,19	4	256	0,04	40,21	53,70	2,36	0,0000000000
28	EUROPE	27	0,15	5	162	0,02	38,47	51,96	2,69	0,0000000000
29	CITIZENS	13	0,07	5	21		38,02	51,51	4,58	0,0000000000
30	EAGLES	10	0,05	2	7		37,43	50,92	5,79	0,0000000000

Figure 1: Top thirty keywords in Napoleon's proclamation corpus

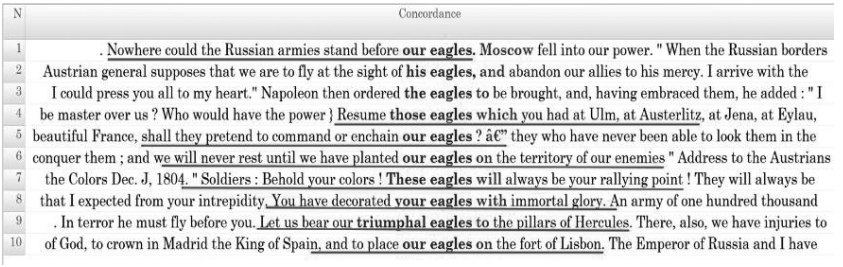
Some of these keywords, highlighted in red, are representative of Napoleon's military rhetoric. We will consider «soldiers» and «eagles», although other keywords would deserve a more exhaustive discussion.



N	Concordance	Set T
1	to the Soldiers on Entering Milan May Z5, 1796. " **Soldiers** : You have rushed Uke a torrent from the top	...S
2	of esteem I shall never forget."- Proclamation to the **Soldiers** on Entering Milan May Z5, 1796. " Soldiers :	...S
3	of scarcely fifteen hundred men killed and wounded. " **Soldiers** : this success is due to your un- limited	...S
4	the victory with the least possible bloodshed. My **soldiers** are my children." Proclamation to the Soldiers	...S
5	fortune, and proudly boasted of belonging to you. Yes, **soldiers,** you have done much, â€" but remains there	...S
6	our power. Fifteen thousand men only have escaped. " **Soldiers** : I announced to you the result of a great	...S
7	! Our generosity shall not again wrong our policy. **Soldiers,** your Emperor is among you ! You are but the	...S
8	of the War of the Third Coalition, September, " **Soldiers** : The war of the third coalition is commenced.	...S
9	been created by the malice and gold of England. But, **soldiers,** we shall have forced marches to make,	...S
10	their fortunes, and upon every one of them our **soldiers** found from three to five hundred louis." All the	...S
11	after the War of the Thmi Coalition, October, i8o. " **Soldiers** of the Grand Army : In a fort- night we have	...S
12	to ex- claim, ' There is a brave man.' " Address to the **Soldiers** on the Signing of Peace with Austria, Dec. 26	...S
13	empire." Farewell to the Old Guards April 20, 18 14. " **Soldiers** of my old guard, I bid you fare- well. For	...S
14	I embrace you all in the person of your general. Adieu, **soldiers** ! Be always gallant and good." Proclamation	...S
15	to Soldiers During the Siege of Mantua Nov. 6 " **Soldiers** : I am not satisfied with you ; you have shown	...S
16	of his liberty and his Government." Address to **Soldiers** During the Siege of Mantua Nov. 6 " Soldiers	...S
17	after the Battle of Austerlitz, Dec., 1805. " **Soldiers** : I am satisfied with you. In the Battle of	...S
18	to the Soldiers after the Battle of Austerlitz " **Soldiers** : The Russian army has presented itself	...S
19	. My soldiers are my children." Proclamation to the **Soldiers** after the Battle of Austerlitz " Soldiers : The	...S
20	the enemy." Address to the Guard, April 2, 18 14. " **Soldiers** : The enemy has stolen three marches on us,	...S
21	alleviate fatigue, we have no one on the sick list. The **soldiers** have found a great resource in the posteques	...S
22	my right, they must present their flank to your blows. " **Soldiers** : I will myself direct all your battalions. I will	...S
23	. I was bound, in duty to my fellow citizens, to the **soldiers** perishing in our armies, and to the national	...S
24	? " Proclamation to the Army, May, I7g6. " **Soldiers** : You have in fifteen days gained six victories,	...S
25	Troops before the Battle of Borodino Sept. 7, 1812. " **Soldiers** : This is the battle you have so much desired.	...S
26	been shot on the charge of emigration." Have the **soldiers** of liberty become executioners ? Can the	...S

Figure 2: Concordances of «soldiers»

The concordance lines for «soldiers» are representative of Napoleon's hortatory discourse as far as his relationship with his soldiers is concerned. In terms of semantic relations and collocations, we may observe the presence of semantic patterns that evoke the magnificent and persuasive quality of Napoleon's language in addressing his soldiers, for example *My soldiers are my children, Your emperor is among you, Soldiers of the Grand Army, Be always gallant and good, This is the battle you have so much desired*. These examples are evidence, though implicit, of the celebration of war, a call to military enterprises. Another interesting element that characterizes Napoleon's hortatory discourse is «eagles», the Imperial symbol that forms the centre point of Napoleon's coat of arms.



N	Concordance
1	. Nowhere could the Russian armies stand before **our eagles.** Moscow fell into our power. " When the Russian borders
2	Austrian general supposes that we are to fly at the sight of **his eagles,** and abandon our allies to his mercy. I arrive with the
3	I could press you all to my heart." Napoleon then ordered **the eagles to** be brought, and, having embraced them, he added : " I
4	be master over us ? Who would have the power } Resume **those eagles which** you had at Ulm, at Austerlitz, at Jena, at Eylau,
5	beautiful France, shall they pretend to command or enchain **our eagles** ? â€" they who have never been able to look them in the
6	conquer them ; and we will never rest until we have planted **our eagles** on the territory of our enemies " Address to the Austrians
7	the Colors Dec. J, 1804. " Soldiers : Behold your colors ! **These eagles will** always be your rallying point ! They will always be
8	that I expected from your intrepidity. You have decorated **your eagles with** immortal glory. An army of one hundred thousand
9	. In terror he must fly before you. Let us bear our **triumphal eagles** to the pillars of Hercules. There, also, we have injuries to
10	of God, to crown in Madrid the King of Spain, and to place **our eagles** on the fort of Lisbon. The Emperor of Russia and I have

Figure 3: Concordances of «eagles»

In this case, it is interesting to investigate the different metaphorical meanings that the word «eagle» takes on in Napoleon's proclamation. It is a metaphor of the Napoleonic army as in 1,

1. «I entered Russia. The French armies were constantly victorious on the fields of Ostrono, Polotsk, Mohilef, Smolensk, Moskova, Malo-Yaroslavetz. **Nowhere could the Russian armies stand before our eagles**. Moscow fell into our power».

of soldiers as in 2,

2. **Napoleon then ordered the eagles to be brought**, and, having embraced them, he added: «**I embrace you all in the person of your general**. Adieu, soldiers ! Be always gallant and good».

of France as in 3,

3. Those whom we have beheld for twenty-five years traversing all Europe to raise up enemies against us, who have spent their lives in fighting against us in the ranks of foreign armies, and in cursing our beautiful France, **shall they pretend to command or enchain our eagles**?

of bravery as in 4,

4. Your general, called to the throne by the choice of the people, and raised on your shields, is restored to you; come and join him. Mount the tri-colored cockade; you wore it in the days of our greatness. We must forget that we have been the masters of nations; but we must not suffer any to inter-meddle in our affairs. Who would pretend to be master over us? Who would have the power? **Resume those eagles** which you had at Ulm, at Austerlitz, at Jena, at Eylau, at Wagram, at Friedland, at Tudela, at Eckmiihl, at Essling, at Smolensk, at the Moskowa, at Lutzen, at Wurtchen, at Montmirail.

of life as in 5,

5. «Soldiers: I am satisfied with you. In the Battle of Austerlitz you have justified all that I expected from your intrepidity. **You have decorated your eagles with immortal glory**».

of national identity and unity as in 6,

6. «Soldiers: Behold your colors! **These eagles will always be your rallying point!** They will always be where your Emperor may think them necessary for the defence of his throne and of his people. Swear to sacrifice your lives to defend them, and by your courage to keep them constantly in the path of victory. Swear!»

of the French conquests as in 7 and 8.

7. «Soldiers: I have need of you. The hideous presence of the leopard contaminates the peninsula of Spain and Portugal. In terror he must fly before you. **Let us bear our triumphal eagles to the pillars of Hercules**».

8.. «I depart in a few days to place myself at the head of my troops, and, with the aid of God, to crown in Madrid the King of Spain, and **to place our eagles on the fort of Lisbon**».

Hortatory discourse is also linguistically instantiated by means of interrogative types of exchange. In particular, the use of introductory *Will you* or *Shall we/ They*, as in the following examples:

9. «Soldiers, you are naked and ill - fed! Government owes you much and can give you nothing. The patience and courage you have shown in the midst of these rocks are admirable; but they gain you no renown; no glory results to you from your endurance. It is my design to lead you into the most fertile plains of the world. Rich provinces and great cities will be in your power; there you will find honor, glory, and wealth. **Soldiers of Italy! *will you* be wanting in courage or perseverance?**»

10. «***Will you*** **permit the army to escape which has carried terror into your families?** You will not!»

11. The first act of the campaign is finished. Millions of men address you in strains of praise. **But *shall we allow* our audacious enemies to violate with impunity the territory of the Republic?**

12. «Those whom we have beheld for twenty-five years traversing all Europe to raise up enemies against us, who have spent their lives in fighting against us in the ranks of foreign armies, and in cursing our beautiful France, ***shall they*** **pretend to command or enchain our eagles**?» they who have never been able to look them in the face. ***Shall we*** **suffer them to inherit the fruit of our glorious toils, to take possession of our honors, of our fortunes; to calumniate and revile our glory?**

In each case, the use of these interrogative forms contributes to bolstering a feeling of empathy between Napoleon and his soldiers. By exalting his soldiers, Napoleon is in fact celebrating himself, his own power. The other form of discourse that is part of the Napoleonic order of discourse is the epideictic one, i.e., the discourse of praise and blame. Here the focus is on some findings resulting from the analysis of corpus B, constructed from the memoirs, diaries and narratives written by Napoleon's generals and soldiers. These documents shed light on the extreme admiration that Napoleon's soldiers felt for their general and Emperor.

13. Napoleon **emerged** from his tent around three in the morning, worked with his chief of staff Berthier on last-minute details, then **rode** with some of his staff across the Kolocha and **made his way to** the Shevardino Redoubt. He had taken the temperature of the ranks and found them «strangely quiet»; the kind of silence you associate with a state of great expectation or tension. He issued a proclamation **trimmed toward** the pragmatic: «Soldiers! Here is the battle you have so much desired. Now victory depends on you; we need it. Victory will give us abundant supplies, good winter quarters, and a prompt return to our native land. Conduct yourself as you did at Austerlitz, at Friedland, at Vitebsk, at Smolensk, and may the most distant generations cite your conduct on this day with pride; may it be said of each one of you: **"He fought in that great battle under the walls of Moscow!**"».

The verbal description of Napoleon is consistent with the classical iconography of the Emperor: *emerge, ride, make one's own way, fight, master*, *lead* are words that tend to collocate with Napoleon and testify to the soldiers' admiration for their General.

14. General Napoleon **emerged** onto the world stage fully formed.

15. As he revolutionized the big-picture aspect of war, Napoleon became **a master** at motivating the individual soldier. «You must speak to his soul in order to electrify him», he famously said.

16. But his attention went deeper than oratory. He remembered hundreds and hundreds of his troops' names, tweaked their ears and joked with them during reviews, **led them brilliantly**, and promoted and rewarded them on the spot for acts of bravery that would have gone unnoticed under another general.

Epideictic discourse is also conveyed by means of metaphors: in the two instances below, there is the metaphor NAPOLEON IS A NATURAL PHENOMENON.

17. At the end of the tour, **Napoleon erupted in rage** at the doctors. «I shall send you back to Paris to care for the inhabitants of the Palais Royal», he threatened.

18. One of his officers' horses stepped on a dying Russian soldier: it was almost impossible to avoid on grounds tightly packed with casualties and body parts. **Napoleon erupted in rage**, to which one of his staff replied that it was only a Russian. «There are no enemies after a victory, but only men!» he shouted, a reversal of his remark to Caulaincourt at Smolensk. He ordered his men to fan out and assist the wounded in any way they could.

The concluding part of Case Study 1 discusses some findings from the subcorpus of literary works extracted from the Gutenberg project. The Subcorpus contains examples that testify to the great feeling of admiration that contemporary authors had for Napoleon. These are some samples of the collocations that accompany Napoleon in literary works:

veneration

19. Napoleon's name, and his alone, **had penetrated hither; he is held in great veneration**, thanks to one or two old soldiers who have returned to their native homes, and who of evenings tell marvelous tales about his adventures and his armies for the benefit of these simple folk [Honoré de Balzac, *The Country Doctor*].

extraordinary

20. Napoleon, you see, my friends, was born in Corsica, which is a French island warmed by the Italian sun; it is like a furnace there, everything is scorched up, and they keep on killing each other from father to son for generations all about nothing at all--'tis a notion they have. To begin at the beginning, **there was something extraordinary** about the thing from the first; it occurred to his mother, who was the handsomest woman of her time, and a shrewd soul, to dedicate.

21. Then **Napoleon**, who was only Bonaparte in those days, **breathed goodness knows what into us,** and on we marched night and day [Honoré de Balzac, *The Country Doctor*].

There is a wide use of metaphors which associate Napoleon with the *sun* as in 22, with a *Lion* as in 23, as well as of semantic relationships and collocations that help building the image of Napoleon as a paternal figure:

22. And I who am telling you all this have seen in Paris **eleven kings and a crowd of princes all round about Napoleon, like rays about the sun**!

23. for I forgot to tell you that his name **Napoleon really means the «Lion of the Desert»**. And that is gospel truth. You will hear plenty of other things said about the Emperor, but they are all monstrous nonsense. Because, look you, to **no man of woman born would God have given the power to write his name in red, as he did, across the earth, where he will be remembered for ever!**... Long live **«Napoleon, the father of the soldier, the father of the people!»** [Honoré de Balzac, *The Country Doctor*].

– as a biblical figure:

24. «The right hand of the Lord became glorious in power; the right hand of the Lord dashed in pieces the enemy!" "You are all right; only you forget the true parallel. **France is Israel, and Napoleon is Moses**. Europe, with her old overgorged empires and rotten dynasties, is corrupt Egypt» [Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*].

– as a man of power:

25. Those who have not seen the glory of the Emperor Napoleon, during the years 1810, 1811, and 1812, **can never conceive what a pitch of power one man may reach**, [Erckmann-Chatriantoj, *The Conscript: A Story of the French War of 1813*].

– as a man of genius:

26. At that time there was in France **a man of genius** – Napoleon. He conquered everybody everywhere–that is, he killed many people because he was a great genius. And for some reason he went to kill Africans, and killed them so well and was so cunning and wise that when he returned to France he ordered everybody to obey him, and they all obeyed him. Having become an Emperor he again went out to kill people in Italy, Austria, and Prussia. And there too he killed a great many, [Leo Tolstoj, *War and Peace*].

– as a man endowed with an infallible nature:

> **27. Infallibility** was the making of Napoleon; he would have been a god if he had not filled the world with the sound of his fall at Waterloo, [Honoré de Balzac, *The Country Doctor*].

3.2 Case Study 2

Within the notion of discourse(s), it is important to underline that the use of words in particular communication acts reveals precise intentions and has consequences on the kind of action which is performed by the use of such words. As Oleksander Mykhed puts it in a book covering the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict, «the language of war is direct, like an order that cannot have a double interpretation and needs no clarification […] with no rhetorical questions» [Mykhed 2024]. In this sense, then, the semantic relationship among words is very important to identify how words are used as peculiar instances of representation of facts, intentions and ideologies. In order to achieve such goals, a collection of texts represents the first step to see how words are used in particular contexts and genres, namely war-related texts and/or declarations of war. Forms of discursive instances can emerge from these texts, and they can be retrieved by means of methods that make the most out of the aggregation of bulks of texts. In particular, corpus-based approaches could be pivotal in the identification of such patterns in an aggregated perspective, thus «uncovering linguistic patterns which can enable us to make sense of the ways that language is used in the construction of discourses (or ways of constructing reality)» [Baker 2023, p. 1].

In this perspective, then, a collection of speeches dealing with a particular 'moment' in wartime could be interesting to reveal some language- and discourse-related elements. A corpus of texts has been created for this purpose. The corpus includes a number of speeches made by some key figures in political and military environments over time, ranging from the Napoleonic Era up to contemporary times. Texts come from official statements as well as editorial sources [Prescott 2009], and include declarations of war, addresses to institutional representations or public speeches in concomitance with war-related events. Some of them include very important speeches such as those by Winston Churchill, John F. Kennedy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, George W. Bush, and Vladimir Putin. The texts have been collected and stored as machine-readable format (.txt) to be analysed via corpus-processing tools [AntConc 3.5.8]. They have been divided into different files, in a sort of time- or era-dependent classification: Napoleon's addresses; 18th century; 19th century; WWI; WWII; contemporary speeches and declarations. Though small (about 60,000 tokens), the corpus reveals some interesting insights into the language of war (and peace);

as a matter of fact, in aggregating data, corpus-based approaches can provide instances of repeated patterns and occurrences, thus confirming that *density* of information is as important as quantity of data collected, depending on the purpose of the analysis. As Raineri and Debras put it, «a corpus may be small but more representative of a language, variety or register than larger ones if sampling is based on systematic, linguistically-motivated decisions rather than convenience or some principle of authority» [2019, p. 4]. Data in the corpus is analysed in an aggregated perspective, though some tools could identify the precise text a given piece of information refers to. A starting point to get quantitative/qualitative data is a (lemmatised) wordlist; in this case, the list of the terms/token found in the corpus shows the overall frequency of a whole lemma, including all inflected forms (different verb forms, singular/plural, etc.). This choice has been made in order «to retrieve all possible inflected forms and spelling variants of a word in a single search» [Andersen 2010, p. 552]. Frequency of use provides insight about the nature of the data retrieved, since it represents «a good starting point for the analysis of any type of corpus» [Baker 2023, p. 81]. Sorting a frequency list in descending order is important to reveal the content of a corpus, especially when looking for the so-called *lexical* items (e.g., nouns or verbs or relevant adjectives); in this case, two of the most frequent – and consequently significant – items are represented by the tokens/lemmas *war* and *peace*. This confirms that both words are found in the corpus, and the presence of *peace* in a corpus of war-related speeches reinforces the idea that both terms are intertwined and need to be in the same contexts, as in the well-known Latin adage *Si vis pacem, para bellum* (If you want peace, then prepare for war). It is quite clear that frequencies are somehow different in the corpus, as the lemma *war* accounts for 307 occurrences, ranking #26 in the frequency list. *Peace*, on the other hand, follows with 203 occurrences, ranking #35 in the same list. Interestingly, though the corpus shows lemmatised aggregations, there are no instances of terms other than *peace* (e.g., *peaceful*) in the corpus, while *war* includes nine instances of *wars* and one occurrence of *warring*. Frequency alone determines poor empiric language considerations, though they can guide towards the identification of repeated patterns and associations within a corpus. This is why the analysis of concordances, or words in actual contexts of use, can provide insights into micro- and macro-dimensions of language. An example is represented by the concordance lines of *war*; irrespective of the texts such occurrences belong to, an aggregation depending on a sorting process could be interesting to reveal some grammatical and/or lexical patterns. Using the *Sort* tool in AntConc, all instances of co-texts with 1R (or the first token immediately following the term on its right) are sorted in alphabetical order, so that colligational patterns could be identified. The same *Sort* tool allows for a multi-sorting procedure, according to which different layers of language can be re-arranged. In this case, a 1R + 2R (first element on

the right and second element on the right of the nodeword, respectively) sorting allows for the identification of some crystallised patterns of use. An example is represented by *war + against + N*, in which a clear identification of an enemy is voiced. Such element could be identified in the form of a nation or State (*all nations; Kuwait; the USA; the USA and England*), a representative of power (*Your Majesty; the government and the people*), or a political/ideological condition (*monstrous tyranny*; *crafty and powerful bandits; interventionists; press campaigns*). Though less frequent, also the pattern *war + between + N* shows similar examples (*capitalists; the Great Powers; two maritime powers*), though in a more metaphorical sense.

Another perspective deals with the left co-texts that account for some patterns of use that depend on some expected language structures. In a 1L + 2L sorting process (first element on the left and second element on the left of the nodeword, respectively), some solid noun phrases (*adj + war*) could be retrieved. An example is represented by *civil war,* with five occurrences. It is interesting to note, in this case, the information that lies *beyond* such occurrences, in a sort of metadata-based completion of the information provided by the reading of concordance lines. All instances of *civil war* come from some predictable sources – two from Napoleon's addresses, two from 19th century speeches and declarations, and one from contemporary speeches and declarations (in the latter case Vladimir Putin's speech ahead of the conflict against Ukraine, generally referring to some civil wars that broke out in several places at the time of the beginning of warfare operations). The same pattern (*adj + N*) reveals the modifiers used with the term *war* to explain its nature, thus expanding its pre-supposed nature of a 'total' concept that does not accept any gradient of meaning *per se* (a sort of Aristotelian category that exists because of its antonym, that is *peace*). This is why the corpus reveals instances of *hard war, impending war, just war, long war* to determine its quality; but there are also other occurrences revealing the actual nature of a conflict, such as in the case of *joint war* or *land war*. Another strong colligational pattern that comes out with a 1L + 2L sorting procedure is *N + of + war*; apart from some standalone occurrences such as *fatigues of war; horrors of war; conventions of war; ravages of war; sounds of war;* or *conflagration of war; times of war; years of war,* another solid (though predictable) pattern is *declaration of war*, which reveals and confirms the nature of the corpus investigated. Ten occurrences (retrieved almost from WWI and WWII groups) confirm that the presence of the phrase has a pragmatic effect that involves the communicative power of such language instances, which also reinforce the agency power of those involved in such declarative acts. As a matter of fact, these words do have a consequence depending on the person who uttered them, thus being subordinate to the (political or military) status. In recalling Austin's speech act theory, Tobia confirms the illocutionary force of these utterances and the status

of both speakers/addressers and hearers/recipients involved in it. Declarations of war, in particular,

> will involve a person or group occupying a special position (of high status) within the hierarchical structure. This occurs within the extralinguistic institution of the international political culture. And the high-status speaker's declaration of war begins war when that intention has the declarational status as acknowledged by the conventional system […] Declarations *can* change the world [Tobia 2016, p. 51].

The contemporary speeches and declaration section within the corpus shows also three occurrences of *PN [Proper Name] + N,* in a language process that somehow provides people of power with the responsibility and/or the accountability of a conflict. Though confined in a single text with the pattern found twice in the same co-text, the occurrences of [Lyndon] *Johnson's war* and *Nixon's war* (referring to the Vietnam war) do exemplify how a conflict can be somehow ideologically associated with the person who has had a decisive role in political or military terms, and go down in the history books for warfare-related events. Another instance that witnesses the involvement of this kind of speech act with this specific matter is the (repeated) use of *this war*, in particular with the association of verbs that underline the involvement of states or casualties. Considering the verbal process associated with the nodeword *war,* two verbs in L1 position are worth mentioning, confirming the clear-cut (and diametrically opposed, in some cases) nature of the actions associated with war. The corpus reveals some examples of *wage war* (including also two instances of *waging war* and *waged war*), a verb that is a synonym of «carry on» but it is often associated with terms such as *war, riot* or *campaign* (*Merriam Webster*), thus confirming its more technical nature and showing a semantic preference for war-related words. Giving the close association between these two terms in the corpus in term of co-textual occurrence, it is also true (though the limited availability of the dataset analysed) that «semantic preference generally remains relatively closely tied to the phenomenon of collocation» [Partington 2004, p. 150]. On the other side of the semantic spectrum, different examples (10) of the phrase *end the war* reveal the intention, within war speeches and declarations of war, to recall or linger on the possibility that a conflict could be interrupted.

As far as collocations are concerned, *war* shows 185 collocate types and 2129 total collocates calculated in the span 5L -5R. Using statistical methods (and not pure numerical frequency as too many grammatical words may provide associations with low semantical relations) some of the most relevant collocates are *predatory; impending; patriotic; issues; civil;* as well as the above-mentioned *waging* and *wage.* The token *peace* ranks 113th as a collocate of *war*, with 14 instances (eight on the left co-text, 6 on the right co-text). The concordance lines reveal the use of both words as a way to create ideologically

contrasting views (as showed in Figure 1), thus confirming the diametrically opposed vision of both words but also confirming that «peace turned into the language of war» [Shehadeh 2015, p. 4], as both terms and ideas depend on each other as a *de facto* condition.

Figure 4: Concordance lines of *war* with *peace* appearing as a frequent collocate

Shifting to *peace* as a nodeword, the above-mentioned sorting procedure allows for the identification of some solid patterns which recur more than once in the corpus of speeches and declarations. In this case, a 1R + 2R sorting reveals how the term peace is used in conjunction with other terms that could reinforce the idea of such value, especially in a corpus of texts focussed on its opposite term, *war*. An example is represented by *peace + conj + N,* in particular with the conjunction *and*. Therefore, examples such as *peace and freedom; peace and friendship; peace and happiness; peace and hope; peace and justice; peace and reconciliation; peace and safety; peace and security* indicate that the term 'needs' other related and positive linguistic elements to crystallise its semantic force. To observe the verbal process associated with *peace,* instead, a 1L + 2L sorting reveals that some typical verbs associated with the term are *attain, achieve, reach, sign, bring, discuss;* other unusual though evocative verbal associations are *conquer* and *cry*, which are truly context-dependant and both come from instances from the past (Napoleonic addresses and 18th century speeches). In colligational terms, *peace* shows a prevalence for the prepositions *for* and *of* in the left co-texts, so that patterns such as *N + prep + peace* are used to highlight the importance of peace as a goal to attain. In this perspective, there are some examples from the corpus such as *a basis for peace; calls for peace; chances for peace; concerns for peace; dream for peace; hopes for peace; initiatives for peace; plan for peace; blessing of peace; cause of peace; challenges of peace; condition of peace; fu-*

ture of peace; goal of peace; hope of peace; overture of peace; page of peace; principles of peace; proposals of peace; prospects of peace; reestablishment of peace; sentiments of peace.

A final overview of both terms in the corpus can be discussed by means of another tool used in corpus-processing methods and available in the software used for this analysis, AntConc. The tool is called *concordance plot* and shows graphically how a given token is distributed within a file (or files, as in the case of this corpus in which every era has been gathered in a separate text file), giving some insights dealing with the impact of these terms within the corpus. As for the word *war*, the concordance plot shows high prevalence in the sections concerning WWI, WWII and contemporary speeches (Figure 5).

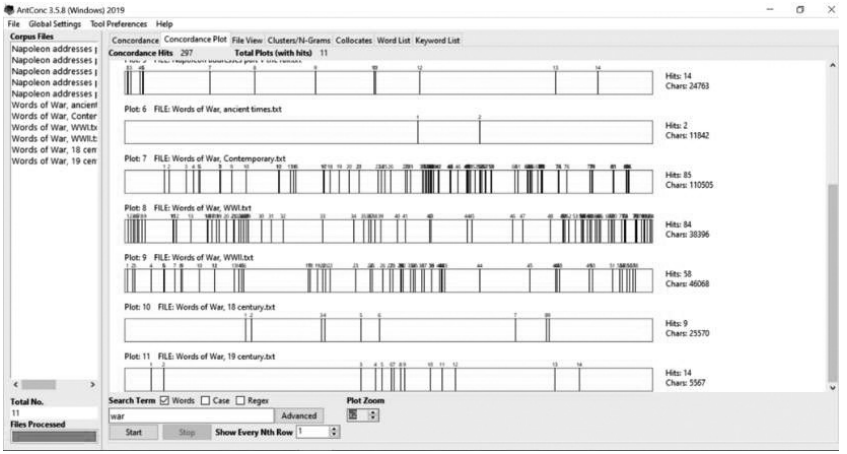


Figure 5: Concordance plot of *war* in the corpus analysed

Focusing on the sole Napoleonic addresses, instead, the term is used 45 times with a certain prevalence for the period associated with his role as Emperor of France (20 hits, Figure 6).

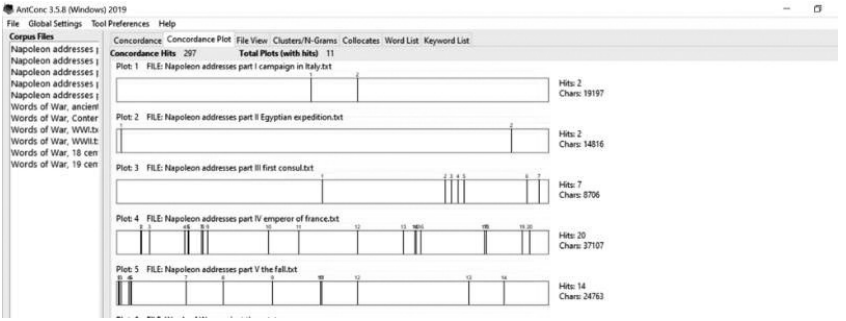


Figure 6: Concordance plot of *war*, Sub-corpus of Napoleonic addresses

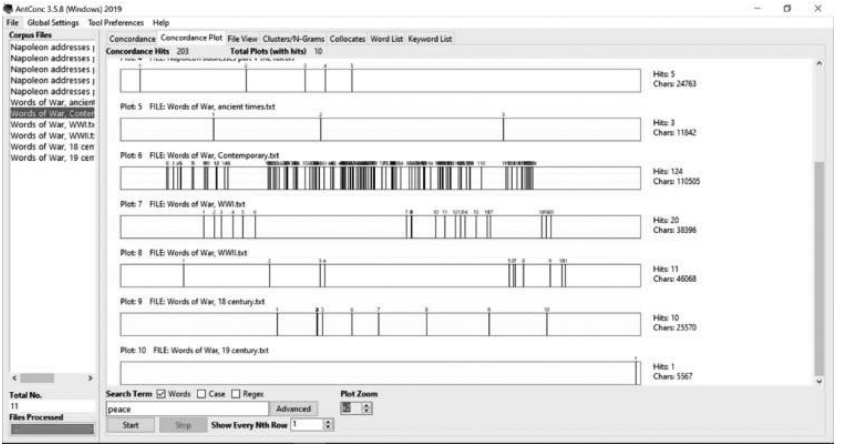


Figure 7: Concordance plot of peace in the corpus analysed

The same observation can be made for the concordance plot of the term *peace*, which shows (high) prevalence of use in the Contemporary section (124 hits), accounting for more than half the total number of occurrences in the corpus (Figure 7). Focusing on the sub-corpus of Napoleonic addresses, instead, *peace* is used quite consistently with the term *war*, observing also a similar distribution (more frequent in the section dealing with his period as Emperor of France) with a total number of 34 occurrences (Figure 8).

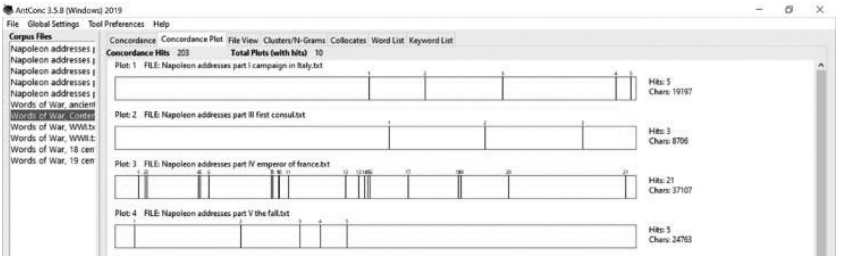


Figure 8: Concordance plot of peace, Sub-corpus of Napoleonic addresses

4. Discussion and Conclusion

4.1 Case 1

The two case studies illustrate how discourses of war are shaped differently by social relations and ideologies during two distinct historical periods. In the case of Napoleon, the findings demonstrate how the historical and cultural image of the French Emperor is constructed and sustained through epideictic and hortatory discourses. Both forms of discourse are realized at the pragma-lin-

guistic level through various devices, including word choice and rhetorical tropes such as metaphors, metonymies, and speech acts.

At the lexical level, the hortatory discourse relies on a persuasive and grand rhetoric characterized by a language that evokes the fatherly attitude of Napoleon, who addresses his soldiers as if they were his children. This vocabulary exhibits the traits of nationalistic language; the figure of Napoleon as a father serves as a metonymy for France as the fatherland, as demonstrated by the study of «eagles». Napoleon's exhortative fatherly style is further emphasized through directive speech acts that are often performed indirectly using interrogative forms. Phrases such as 'Will you' and 'Shall you/they,' which function as directive illocutionary force-indicating devices (IFIDs), are commonly found in the martial rhetoric of political and military leaders calling their soldiers and the population to action.

The exhortative message is also conveyed through metaphors, such as those comparing Napoleon's military actions to natural phenomena like a volcanic eruption. This metaphor not only celebrates his dynamic nature and commitment to movement and struggle but also praises his grandiosity and impetuous force, as it occurs in epideictic discourse. The significance of Napoleon in Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries is captured through the astronomical metaphor «NAPOLEON IS THE SUN», suggesting that the fate of many nations revolves around his destiny.

These linguistic elements are not isolated. Through exhortation and praise, they contribute to the political legitimization of Napoleon as a leader, his mythologization and cultural canonization as a modern Moses, and a «man of power» and a «man of genius», endowed with «an infallible nature». These processes appear in both literary and non-literary works, and the Emperor's ideological impact unfolds across various socio-political contexts. Additionally, they reflect the historical moment. The orders of discourses built around Napoleon helped shape, while also being shaped by, historical events, national ideologies, and the nature of institutions that were on the verge of transformation, thus not only affecting the geopolitical organization and future of Europe but also paving the way for a new rhetoric of war, as indicated by the findings in the latter part of this paper.

4.2 Case 2

Some interesting findings emerge from the analysis of the corpus of declarations of war and war-related speeches in a diachronic perspective. The main focus of such language events is on warfare-oriented representation, therefore the massive presence of the lemma *war* (along with a few examples of *wars* and *warring*) confirms the nature of the corpus which has been created. The analysis of the concordance lines reveals some interesting patterns that recur in the corpus, confirming that in a diachronic perspective some literal as well as metaphorical

and ideologically laden representations are consistently found. What emerges is the fact that a term like *war* is often used as a way to open up a conflictual perspective that transcends any on-field actions. In patterns such as *war + against + N*, a definite entity (a country, or a representative of power, or even a political/ideological condition) is associated with this term, signifying that the idea of war needs a corresponding referent, an enemy to be fought. Linguistically speaking, these language occurrences confirm their nature of speech acts that rely on the illocutionary force emitted by the addresser(s), confirming Tobia's words [Tobia 2016] according to which declarations of war do have an effect on the geopolitical equilibriums as soon as they are uttered, even if military actions have not been undertaken. This assumption goes beyond official declarations and involves any war-related speeches, since they are used to reaffirm a leader's status, or to reinvigorate a country's position during a conflict, as well as a persuasion and propaganda technique to lift the spirits of a population or an army [Jowett and O'Donnell 2015]. Adjectives play an important role in defining a conflict, attributing a precise condition that could be in favour of an addresser's side (such as the example of a *just war*), while the pattern *N + of + war* reveals an ideological intention towards a recipient-oriented blaming process, as seen in examples like *horrors of war, fatigues of war, ravages of war*. The corpus also reveals a considerable presence of the lemma *peace*, which leads to the identification of solid patterns of use, especially in the co-association of lexical items – especially nouns – with the term. Similarly to the use of *war* as a way to instate an ideological condition with performative consequences (e.g., declaring wars to start a conflict), *peace* has a similar function in recalling and hoping for a condition to be restored even in speeches pertaining to conflict. The association with semantically akin terms (*freedom; friendship; happiness; hope; reconciliation; safety; security; reconciliation*) creates solid patterns that are also confirmed in other colligational patterns such as *N + for + peace* to provide ideational (*dream for peace; hopes for peace; blessing of peace; condition of peace; sentiment of peace*) and pragmatic conditions (*initiatives for peace; plan for peace; condition of peace; prospects of peace; reestablishment of peace*).

To conclude, we have seen that different genres and different text types are characterized by a variety of linguistic resources that can be investigated in order to identify the orders of discourse that revolve around social, political and cultural events. The data analysed in the corpus, however small, reveals some interesting occurrences dealing with the two most iconic and representative terms, that is *war* and *peace*. The observation of co-textual and contextual information around these terms allows for the identification of some solid patterns and occurrences that are used both pragmatically and ideologically, confirming that the two terms can coexist (as a sort of Platonic dualism between, in this case between the linguistically conveyed idea and its actual representation) and have a linguistic force that needs to be performed, especially when it comes to reach *peace* over *war*.

Bibliography

Andersen, G. (2010): «How to use corpus linguistics in sociolinguistics», in A. O'Keefe, M. McCarthy, eds, *The Routledge Handbook of Corpus Linguistics*, London, Routledge, pp. 549-562.

Baker, P. (2023): *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*, London, Bloomsbury.

Beale, W. H. (1978): «Rhetorical Performative Discourse: A New Theory of Epideictic», *Philosophy and Rhetoric* vol. 11, n. 4, pp. 221-246.

Bell, D. A. (2007): *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know it*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Bonura, M. (2012): «Napoleonic Memory and the French Officer Corps: An Analysis of Le Spectateur Militaire from 1826 to 1836», *Napoleonica. La Revue*, vol. 3, n. 15, pp. 106-118.

Bostdorff, D. M. (2011): «Epideictic Rhetoric in the Service of War: George W. Bush on Iraq and the 60th Anniversary of the Victory over Japan», *Communication Monographs*, vol. 78, n. 3, pp. 296-323. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2011.589458

Broers, M. (2011): «Changes in War: The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars», in Strachan H., Scheipers S. Eds., *The Changing Character of War*, New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 64-78.

Browning, R. (1993): *The War of the Austrian Succession*, London, Macmillan.

Burke, K. (1969): *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Berkeley, University of California Press.

Chandler, D. (1999): *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, New York, Simon & Schuster.

Chiluwa, I., Ruzaite, J. (2024): «Analysing the language of political conflict: a study of war rhetoric of Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky», *Critical Discourse Studies*, pp. 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2024.2331186

Caulaincourt, A. A. L. (1935): *With Napoleon in Russia*, New York, Morrow.

Condit, C. M. (1985): «The functions of epideictic: The Boston massacre orations as exemplar», *Communication Quarterly*, vol. 33, n. 4, pp. 284-298.

Cooper, N., Holman, V. (2008): «War and visual culture since 1900», *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, vol. 1, n. 3, pp. 219-222.

Doyle, W. (2005): *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Dow, B. J. (1989): «The function of epideictic and deliberative strategies in presidential crisis rhetoric», *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, vol. 53, n. 3, pp. 294-310.

Dwyer, P. G. (2004): «Napoleon Bonaparte as Hero and Saviour: Image, Rhetoric and Behaviour in the Construction of a Legend», *French History*, vol. 18, n. 4, pp. 379-403.

Ehlers, M. (2017): *Bonaparte's Dream: Napoleon and the Rhetoric of American Expansion, 1800-1850*, LSU Doctoral Dissertations.

Engberg-Pedersen, A. (2016): *Empire of Chance. The Napoleonic Wars and the Disorder of Things*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.

Esdaile, C. (2008): *Napoleon's Wars: An International History*, London, Penguin Books.
Fairclough, N. (2003): *Analysing Discourse. Textual Analysis for Social Research*, London and New York, Routledge.
Ferguson, N. (1997): *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I*, New York, Basic Books.
Flusberg, S. J., Matlock, T., Thibodeau, P. H. (2018): «War metaphors in public discourse», in *Metaphor and Symbol*, vol. 33, n. 1, pp. 1-18.
Gross, O., Aolain, F. N. (2014): «The Rhetoric of War: Words, Conflict, and Categorization Post-9/11», *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy*, vol. 24, n. 2, Article 1, pp. 241-289.
Hauser, G.A. (1999): «Aristotle on Epideictic: The Formation of Public Morality», *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 29, n. 1, pp. 5-23.
Hodges, A. ed. (2013): «Discourses of War and Peace», *Journal of Language and Politics*, vol. 15, n. 4, pp. 515-518.
— (2015): *War Discourse*, in Tracy K., Sandel T., and Ilie C., eds., *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, New York, John Wiley & Sons, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi026
Hoffmann, P. (1996): *Napoleon and the Organizational Revolution of War*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
Ivie, R. L. ed. (2016): *Journal of Multicultural Discourses. Discourses of War and Peace,* Special Issue, vol. 11.
Jowett, G.S., O'Donnell, V. (2015): *Propaganda and Persuasion,* Los Angeles and London, Sage.
Kaldor, M. (2012): *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, Cambridge, Polity, 3rd edition.
— (2013): «In Defence of New Wars», *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development,* vol. 2, n.1, Art. 4. http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.a
Kampf, Z. (2013): «Mediated Performatives», in Verschueren J., Östman J. O., eds., *Handbook of Pragmatics*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, pp. 1-24.
Kampf, Z., Katriel, T. (2016): «Political Condemnations: Public Speech Acts and the Moralization of Discourse», in D. Carbaugh, ed., *The Handbook of Communication in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, New York, Routledge, pp. 1-21.
Liu, Y. (2024): «A Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis of News Reports on the 2023 Israel-Hamas War», *Journal of Linguistics and Communication Studies*, vol. 3, n. 3, pp. 70-84.
Lukin, A. (2019): *War and Its Ideologies: A Social-Semiotic Theory and Description*, Singapore, Springer Verlag.
— and Marrugo, A. G. (2024): "War in law: A corpus linguistic study of the lexical item war in the laws of war», *Applied Corpus Linguistics*, vol. 4, n. 1, pp. 1-9.
Lule, J. (2004): «War and its metaphors: news language and the prelude to war in Iraq, 2003», *Journalism Studies*, vol. 5, n. 2, pp. 179-190.

McCroskey, J. (2006): *An introduction to rhetorical communication: A western rhetorical perspective (9th ed.),* Boston, Allyn & Bacon.
Mestre-Mestre, E. M. (2022): «Emotion in Politics in Times of War: A Corpus Pragmatics Study», *Corpus Pragmatics*, vol. 7, pp. 323-344.
Murphy, J. M. (1992): «Epideictic and deliberative strategies in opposition to war: The paradox of honor and expediency», *Communication Studies*, vol. 43, n. 2, pp. 65-78.
Mykhed, O. (2024): *The Language of War*, London, Allen Lane.
Oddo, J. (2018): *The Discourse of Propaganda: Case Studies from the Persian Gulf War and the War on Terror*, University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press.
Ohl, J. J. (2015): «Nothing to See or Fear: Light War and the Boring Visual Rhetoric of U.S. Drone Imagery», *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 101, n. 4, pp. 612-632.
Onet, A-E. (2024): «Rhetoric in Times of Conflict: A Study of Famous War-Time Speeches», *International Conference Knowledge-Based Organization*, vol. 30, n. 2, pp. 166-172.
Pankov, M., Mihelj, S. Bajt, V., (2011): «Nationalism, Gender and the Multivocality of War Discourse in Television News», *Media Culture Society*, vol. 33, n. 7, pp. 1043-1059.
Partington, A. (2004): «"Utterly content in each other's company": Semantic prosody and semantic preference», *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* vol. 9, n. 1, pp. 131-156.
Prescott, L. (2009): *Words of War and Peace. Great Speeches of War, Conflict, and Military History,* Boston, Beacon Press.
Raineri, S., Debras, C. (2019): «Corpora and Representativeness, Corpora and Representativeness: Where to go from now?», *CogniTextes,* vol. 19, Doi:10.4000/cognitextes.1311.hal-02326181
Reid, R. F. (1976): «New England rhetoric and the French war, 1754-1760: A case study in the rhetoric of war», *Communication Monographs*, vol. 43, n. 4, pp. 259-286.
Roberts, A. (2015): *Napoleon: A Life*, New York, Viking.
Roque, G. (2008): «Political rhetoric in visual images», in E. Weigand, ed., *Dialogue and Rhetoric*. *(Dialogue Studies II)*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, pp. 185-193.
Rothenberg, G. E. (1997): *The Napoleonic Wars: A Global History*, New York and London, HarperCollins.
— (1999): *The Napoleonic Wars,* London, Cassell.
Schandorf, M. (2015): *A Gesture Theory of Communication*, PhD Dissertation
Schroeder, P. (1994): *The Transformation of European Politics*, 1763-1848, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Searle, J. (1969): *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, New York, Cambridge University Press.

Sheahdeh, R. (2015): *Language of War, Language of Peace. Palestine, Israel and the Search for Justice*, London, Profile Books.
Simms, B. (2008): *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First French Empire*, London, Penguin Press.
Sun, L. (2010): «A Cognitive Study of War Metaphors in Five Main Areas of Everyday English: Politics, Business, Sport, Disease and Love», *Linguistics, Political Science, Psychology*, pp. 1-24.
Tallett, F. (2002): *War and Society in Early Modern Europe: The Napoleonic Wars*, London, Routledge.
Tobia, K.P. (2016): «The Language of War», *The Monist*, vol. 99, n. 1, pp. 40-54.
Vatz, R. E. (1973): «The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation», *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, vol. 6, n. 3, pp. 154-61.
Vivian, B. (2006): «Neoliberal epideictic: Rhetorical form and commemorative politics on September 11, 2002», *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 92, n. 1, pp. 1-26.
Zamoyski, A. (2007): *1812: Napoleon's Fatal March on Moscow*, New York and London, HarperCollins.
— (2018): *Napoleon. A Life*, New York, Basic Books.

Marginalia

Carl Ludwig Achim von Arnim and *Der Preußische Correspondent*

Abstract

This essay examines Ludwig Achim von Arnim's editorial contributions to Der Preußische Correspondent between October 1813 and January 1814, a critical period during the Wars of Liberation. As both editor and active contributor, Arnim played a key role in shaping the newspaper's coverage amidst an intense public relations campaign by the European military alliance against Napoleon, disseminating information on war strategies, battlefield developments, and peace negotiations, and appealing to the public interest in pivotal battles, heroic acts, and strategic manoeuvres. Additionally, patriotic literature—including poems, songs, and speeches—fostered national unity and sustained morale. By analysing Arnim's editorial strategies, this essay explores the intersection of journalism, political discourse, and Romanticism during a transformative moment in European history.

Roswitha Burwick

Ludwig Achim von Arnim (1781-1831), primarily known for *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (*The Boy's Magic Horn,* 1805/1808), – a popular collection of German folk poems and songs co-edited with Clemens Brentano, – is considered one of Germany's most prolific writers of the Romantic period. His published oeuvre – novels, dramas, poems, scientific essays, and journalistic writings – and the drove of manuscripts, mainly housed in the archives of Weimar, Frankfurt, and Krakow, is currently edited in 40 volumes of the historical-critical *Weimarer Arnim Edition*.[1] In addition to his lesser-known scientific writings,[2] his editorship of the political newspaper, *Der Preußische Correspondent,* is an important contribution to the edition since it provides testimony to Arnim's patriotic engagement in the Wars of Liberation

[1] Burwick et al., 2000ff. Ricklefs estimates that the manuscripts amount to approximately 10,000-11,500 folios or 20,000-23,000 pages. See Ricklefs 1987, pp. 209-223. Ehrlich 2024, pp. 155-174.

[2] For Arnim's published scientific writing, see Burwick, 2007; for his manuscripts, see Burwick, 2020.

(*Befreiungskriege* 1813) and his commitment to a more innovative approach to print media.[3] Arnim's tenure was short: it started on October 1, 1813, after the editor, Barthold Georg Niebuhr, departed for Dresden to participate in negotiations about Britain's contributions to the war, and ended on January 31, 1814, when Niebuhr's assignment was completed. With the prelude to and aftermath of Napoleon's defeat in the Battle of Leipzig, October 18-20, 1813, his four-month tenure covered the most important part of the Wars of Liberation. Consequently, from its founding in the spring of 1813 to its demise at the end of 1814, Arnim's term in the publication of *Der Preußische Correspondent* marks a high point in the production of the paper and the history of political journalism in German Romanticism. As editor, Arnim joined the contemporary European newspapers that sourced the material from often hourly reports of the battles, providing a day-to-day history of the turbulent months. As a writer, he interspersed factual reports with anecdotes, personal accounts, letters, poetry, lively narratives of dramatic events, and even rumors – often spread about the outcomes of battles or deaths of combatants. Conscious that an alleged incidence cannot be part of a newspaper's standard reporting and is therefore contestable, he usually added a longer article in which he explains in detail why a story must be published if it appears useful [*PC*, n. 111, 116, 121; Supplement, n. 124]. Furthermore, he argues that rumors call for an investigation of potential lies. To introduce the English-speaking readership to Arnim's journalistic accomplishments at a historically decisive moment in European history, I will discuss *Der Preußische Correspondent* within the context of the contemporary media landscape and Arnim's contribution to the history of the Wars of Liberation, especially Napoleon's defeat.

The Wars of Liberation, 1813-1814

After decisive battles in Lützen/Großgörschen (May 2, 1813), Bautzen (May 20-21, 1813), and Dresden (August 26-27, 1813), culminating in the Battle of Leipzig (October 18-20, 1813), the largest and bloodiest battle in European history before World War I, a coalition between Austria, Prussia, Spain, Great Britain, Portugal, Sweden, and several smaller German states defeated Napoleon and forced the *Grand Armée* to retreat to France. Since the formation

[3] Burwick, Knaack, Moering, 2025. *Der Preußische Correspondent* will contain the complete text of the newspaper starting on October 1, 1813, and ending on January 31, 1814. This essay is based on the commentary, «Zu dieser Ausgabe», by the three editors. Translations are mine. Subsequent citations as *PC*. See also, Knaack 1976; Knaack 2000, pp. 133-141; Knaack 2001, pp. 41-51; Knaack 2004/2005, pp. 21-41; Knaack 2010, pp. 269-278; Knaack 2021, pp. 157-173; Härtl 1990, pp. 120-197; Dreyhaus 1909.

of the Sixth Coalition was critical for the outcome of the Wars of Liberation – *Befreiungskriege* – (March 1813-May 1814), a brief recapitulation of its history will provide the framework for *Der Preußische Correspondent* within a modern-day media landscape.

On June 23, 1812, Napoleon crossed the Neman River with as many as 650,000 men to compel Tzar Alexander I to remain in the Continental System. Russia proclaimed war and retreated to destroy everything potentially valuable for the invaders. On September 7, 1812, the two armies fought the devastating but inconclusive Battle at Borodino. Although Napoleon marched onto Moscow on September 14, he found the city abandoned, half of it burnt down. With winter approaching and food or shelter scarce, the *Grand Armée* was forced to retreat, suffering the loss of its cavalry and at least 370,000 soldiers due to the freezing weather, starvation, and the constant onslaught of the Russian Army. Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, under Napoleon Maréchal d'Empire and Prince Souverain de Pontecorvo, was adopted by the Swedish king Charles XIII, who had no heir and whose line of succession would have ended with his death. Still at war with Britain and Russia, Bernadotte, now Crown Prince of Sweden,[4] turned against Napoleon and sent diplomats in the spring of 1812 to London and St. Petersburg to create a coalition against the emperor, whose army had occupied Swedish Pomerania since January 9, 1812. After Napoleon's disastrous Russian campaign, opposition to his rule gained ground, and several of his vassal states were getting restive. The boldest coup happened on December 30, 1812, when the general of the Prussian auxiliary corps of the Grande Armée, Johann David Ludwig Yorck von Wartenburg[5] and the Russian general Johann Karl Friedrich Anton von Diebitsch-Sabalkansi signed an armistice in the mill of Poscherun southwest of Tauroggen on December 30, 1812, without the consent of King Friedrich Wilhelm III. In a letter to the king dated January 3, 1813, Yorck asked him to agree to the separate peace, as the defeat had weakened Napoleon, and the time seemed right to win over other European nations to form a coalition against the French emperor. Supported by Carl von Clausewitz, who had fought as a volunteer in the Russian-German legion against French foreign rule, it was ultimately a question of conscience that led Yorck to his decision [Härtl 1983, pp. 252-343]. With the armistice, Prussia withdrew from the alliance with Napoleon and signed an alliance with Russia, with which it now fought to liberate Europe from French rule. Although the king initial-

[4] Bernadotte reigned as Carl XIV Johan of Sweden and Carl III Johan of Norway from 5 February 1818 until his death on 8 March 1844.

[5] The Treaty of Tilsit, July 9, 1807, stipulated that Prussia had to fight with the French. On February 5, 1813, Yorck had called the Estates in Königsberg to take up arms against Napoleon. Beethoven named Yorck's March (1808) in his honor.

ly disapproved of Yorck's high-handed move – he had the general arrested and court-martialed – he relented after realizing that the current situation demanded quick decisions due to Napoleon's defeat. In the following weeks, Prussia and Russia agreed in the Treaty of Kalisch (February 27-28, 1813) that the Polish territories, previously under Prussian control, be given to Russia in exchange for territories in northern Germany. Yorck was pardoned and fought in the Wars of Liberation. Thus, the Convention of Tauroggen can be considered an essential step in the formation of the Sixth Coalition of 1813, in which all major European powers – Great Britain, Russia, Prussia, Sweden, and Austria[6] – joined forces against Napoleon.

On March 17, 1813, King Frederick William III of Prussia declared war on France, calling his subjects to arms with his famous speech, «An Mein Volk» (To my People).[7]

Once Wellington had defeated Jean-Baptiste Jourdan in Northern Spain in the Battle of Vitoria on June 21, 1813, and forced Jean de Dieu Soult to withdraw, Britain joined the coalition in June. After heavy losses – estimated at a quarter of a million – on both sides in the battles of Lützen and Bautzen, the combatants declared an armistice until August 10, 1813,[8] to reorganize and recruit new troops. In preparation for a decisive campaign against Napoleon, the Russian Tzar Alexander I, the Prussian King Frederick William III, and Bernadotte met at the Trachtenberg Castle in Silesia. By employing the so-called Fabian Strategy, they planned to avoid direct combat with Napoleon by engaging and defeating his marshals, encircling his battalions until he was cornered in the style of the Roman general Fabius (280–203 B.C.). To carry out the plan, three armies were raised: Field Marshal Gebhard von Blücher was to command the Army of Silesia with 95,000 Prussians and Russians; Bernadotte was to lead the Army of the North (120,000 Swedish, Russian, Prussian, and German troops), and Prince Karl von Schwarzenberg was in charge of the Army of Bohemia, numbering 225,000 Austrians, Russians, and Prussians. Following the armistice, Napoleon defeated the Allies in the Battle of Dresden on August 26–27, aided by torrential rain that rendered the gunpowder useless in the Austrian muskets and cannons against the sabers and lances of Joachim Murat's Cuirassiers, forcing 13,000 men to surrender. Although Napoleon had inflicted heavy losses, he failed to encircle the enemy to end the war in one single battle.

---

[6] After Austria's alliance with France had ended in February 1813, it declared neutrality but joined the alliance in August 1813.

[7] «Note des Königlich Preußischen Staatskanzlers Freiherr von Hardenberg an den Französischen Gesandten am Preußischen Hof Graf von St. Marsan», signed by Hardenberg on March 16, 1813, [Meyer 1858].

[8] Originally, it was to end July 20, but it was extended. See *Le Moniteur Universel*, Paris, 11. Juni 1813 [Plotho 1817].

In the following battles against Bernadotte's army at Großbeeren (August 23) and Blücher at the Katzbach (August 26), Napoleon was defeated when Jacques McDonald's corps was isolated after bridges had been destroyed by rivers surging from torrential rains, forcing his men into the raging waters where many drowned. While the Prussians lost about 4,000 men, 1,300 French troops were killed and wounded, and 20,000 captured. Without sufficient cavalry, Napoleon lost an army corps of 13,000 in the Battle of Kulm (August 29-30). Under General Michel Ney, the French suffered another severe loss at the hands of Bernadotte in Dennewitz (September 6), forcing Napoleon to concentrate on a decisive battle at Leipzig. The French continued to lose support from their allies, such as Bavaria, who joined the coalition on October 8. In the Battle of the Nations, Napoleon's 191,000 troops faced more than 430,000 troops of the Allied armies, were defeated, and retreated westwards. However, as his troops tried to cross the White Elster, the bridge was prematurely demolished, and not counting the soldiers who drowned, 30,000 troops were taken prisoners by the Allied forces. Although Napoleon accomplished several extraordinary strategic skirmishes during the first four months of 1814, his weakened forces were unable to defeat the Allies. After Metternich's unsuccessful negotiations in Frankfurt (November) to offer a peace treaty where Napoleon would retain the title of Emperor and France would return to its former borders with its neighboring states Belgium, Savory, and the Rhineland and give up control of Poland, Spain, the Netherlands, and most of Italy and Germany, an emboldened Legislative Assembly and the Senate proclaimed the deposition of the emperor, resulting in his abdication on April 6, 1814, his signing of the Treaty of Fontainebleau (April 11, 1814) with Austria, Prussia, and Russia, and his exile in Elba on May 4, 1814.

The Print Media during the Wars of Liberation and Der Preußische Correspondent

The extensive historical and military-historical research on the Wars of Liberation documents how intensive public relations accompanied the military alliance work that quickly developed into a modern-day print-media landscape. From various geographical regions, leaflets and pamphlets, brochures, booklets, supplements, and existing and newly founded periodicals provided the population with instantaneous news about the coalition's war strategies, the current battles, and the Allies' treaties and peace negotiations. Established press organs and newspapers, newly founded before and during the Wars of Liberation, played a decisive role as they disseminated reports of the daily events, responding to the public's desire to shed French dominance. Dramatic events like the death of General Jean-Victor Moreau in the Battle of Dresden

on August 27, 1813, or the drowning of the Polish army commander Józef Antoni Poniatowski while crossing the Elster on October 19, 1813, were printed almost verbatim in the prominent press organs and received with both shock and admiration for the epic heroism of the combatants on both sides. Likewise, reports of critical situations in the battles, the valiant behavior of the generals and soldiers, courageous acts of ordinary citizens, and details on spontaneous changes to strategic plans decisive for the outcome of a battle executed at the moment of greatest danger attracted significant interest.

During the 18th and early 19th centuries, long-established Prussian newspapers were critical in shaping opinion. The oldest Berlin newspaper, the *Vossische Zeitung*, a successor of the *Avisen* printed by Christoff Frischmann and his brother Veit, later known as the *Berliner Botenmeister Zeitung* (also known as the *Frischmann-Zeitung*), dated back to 1618. The second oldest newspaper, the *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen*, was founded in 1740 when the printer and publisher Ambrosius Haude received printing privileges. After Haude died in 1748, Johann Karl Spener continued to run the newspaper together with Haude's widow – Spener's sister – Susanne Haude; in 1772, Spener's son Johann Karl Philipp Spener took over the editorship of the paper, which was, until its demise in 1874, referred to as the *Spenersche Zeitung* [Widdecke 1925]. The increasing demand for up-to-date reporting on war preparations, battle formations, the size of the battalions, the number of captured or fallen troops, treaties, and events led to the founding of new, albeit short-lived periodicals, distributed three to four times a week, including *Der Preußische Correspondent*. Especially timely were the field newspapers, operative during the fall of 1813 under the control of Allied headquarters, providing the latest reports directly from the battlefields. Redundant at the end of the war, they were discontinued or redesigned [Bockholt 2004, pp. 26, 42]. As the bulletins and reports were instantly printed with mobile printing equipment in the field camps, they were not subject to censorship like the regular newspapers. Thus, established and newly founded media, including ephemeral press organs, created a complex communication system, establishing a network of European and non-European periodicals that enabled a wide-ranging exchange of news on contemporary historical, political, philosophical, and theological topics [Bockholt 2004, p. 59].

In format and objective, the field newspapers followed Napoleon's *Bulletins de la Grande Armée*; they reported on the events of the war and contained patriotic songs, poems, and anecdotes. The first of these periodicals to appear was *Die Zeitung aus dem Feldlager* on September 23, 1813, which was printed at the Lüneburg headquarters of the Russian general Baron Friedrich Karl von Tettenborn and discontinued after Tettenborn's arrival in Paris at the end of March 1814 [Bockholt 2004, pp. 42-43]. On October 6, 1813, the

Feld-Zeitung was printed in the Prussian headquarters in the Gottfried Hayn field-printing works; it was discontinued on April 29, 1814. An important third field newspaper was the *Deutsche Blätter*, initiated by the Austrian Field Marshal Prince Karl Philipp von Schwarzenberg on October 14, 1813 [Brockhaus 1872, pp. 306-355]. Because of the constant change of the headquarters, the newspapers appeared irregularly but were nevertheless an essential source of information due to the accounts from the battlefields and the immediacy of their reporting. In addition to the print media, the Napoleonic semaphore deserves mention here since it constitutes the earliest telegraphic system of the time, communicating messages often within minutes. In 1792, Claude Chappe (1763-1805) invented the terrestrial semaphore telegraph, which used pivoted indicator arms and conveyed information according to the direction of the indicator's point. An observer at each tower would watch the neighboring tower through a telescope, deciphering the signs and passing the message on to the next tower. Although the sightline between relay stations was limited by geography and weather, this form of visual communication was more effective and efficient than post riders transmitting messages over long distances. In preparation for his conquest of Europe, Napoleon had a system of relay towers built with a sightline to each tower at separations of 10-30 km (5-20 mi) that connected Paris with Brest in the West, Calais in the North, Strassburg in the East, and Venice in the South. What normally took days was communicated in mere hours, even minutes, giving the French army an advantage over its European counterparts.

Since communication between the army commanders, appeals from the monarchs or their generals, and reports from eyewitnesses provided the no hyphenation for the press, editors or reporters – as Arnim described himself – had to be on their feet at dawn to gather the news early in the morning. Translations were done on the spot, as the report on the skirmishes between the English and American fleets on Lake Ontario shows [*PC*, n. 128 (November 10, 1813), pp. 3/2-4/1]. A particular challenge was identifying foreign towns, regions, commanders, statesmen, or dignitaries, as the signatures of the members of the Dutch provisionary government proved who called the Dutch Prince Willem back from exile in Britain to proclaim him King Willem I of Holland.[9] Appeals from the monarchs (King Frederick William's «An mein Volk» (To My People) and «An mein Kriegsheer» (To My Army), bulletins from the commanders, and descriptions of battle formations provide a valuable collection of primary materials on the history and military history of the wars of Europe›s liberation [Henke 1814; Spies 1981].

[9] *PC,* n. 146 (December 11, 1813), pp. 1/2-2/1. Since the papers were copied from each other, the transcription of the name of the Dutch Major General François Clement de Jonge, who signed the declaration of the provisional government in The Hague after the withdrawal of the French on 17.11.1813, was printed as «Jacge».

After months of negotiations, State Chancellor Karl August von Hardenberg gave his approval to Barthold Georg Niebuhr, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Gerhard Scharnhorst, and the publisher Georg Andreas Reimer to add *Der Preußische Correspondent* to the roster of political newspapers that report about the current political situation [Wolfes 2004, p. 392]. Reimer had already asked Hardenberg for permission to publish a newspaper on November 24, 1812, and Niebuhr, who had agreed to take over the editorship of the newspaper under strict censorship, had written to Ludwig Victor Hans von Bülow on November 29, 1812, asking for support. To avoid censorship, Reimer's application asserted that the paper was to provide up-to-date news on a wide range of non-political topics that, if brought to the public's attention, could change the direction of attention and be useful. Furthermore, news from foreign newspapers considered to be in line with the state's political system was to be printed. In addition, efforts would be made to include notes on trade matters, literary articles, and travel descriptions of non-European parts of the world. However, reports on criminal trials, theater articles, puzzles, and the like were to be omitted [Lettow-Vorbeck 1911, I, pp. 1-2, 3-8; Czygan 1909-1911, I, p. 313]. Nevertheless, on December 2, Hardenberg refused permission because the increase in 'political' newspapers in Berlin would raise considerable concerns at this particular historical moment [Lettow-Vorbeck 1911, I, p. 4; Wolfes 2004, pp. CXLIV-CXLV). Only after the intervention of Scharnhorst, who had complained about the outrageous wretchedness of the Berlin print media [Lehmann 1887, p. 563], Hardenberg relented and, on March 25, 1813, granted Niebuhr and Schleiermacher permission to print given the «current circumstances», i.e., the preparation of the allies to fight Napoleon. In contrast to Reimer, Niebuhr's vision was to publish a patriotic paper that reported on the political and historical events (historisches Nationalblatt, politische Zeitung; [Wolfes 2004, p. 392]), a courageous stand, considering the strict censorship of the State Councilor Heinrich Renfner [Lettow-Vorbeck 1911, I, pp. 6-8, 18; Wolfe 2004, pp. 384-392]. Number 40 of the *Spenersche Zeitung* announces *Der Preußische Correspondent* as a «new political newspaper», which, after special authorization by His Excellency the State Chancellor Baron von Hardenberg and favored by a high royal military government through notifications of official news, would appear on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from April 2, 1813.[10]

A few days after the king's appeal to his people («An mein Volk») and Schleiermacher's sermon in the Trinity Church in Berlin (Sermon on March 28, 1813), the first issue of *Der Preußische Correspondent* was published on

[10] *Spenersche Zeitung* or *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen*, Sonnabend, den 3ten April 1813.

Friday, April 2, 1813. Niebuhr opened the paper with a fiery introduction, calling to arms in battle, not in revolution [Lettow-Vorbeck, I, pp. 63-64.]:

> Freedom of speech and writing is restored to us, as is freedom of action. […] It was beneficial that we learned to realize that action is necessary, that the arm saves only with arms, not with the pen. But it is not useless even now since God has broken our chains. […] The German must see clearly what he has to do; he needs reflection and conception. We must think and act like the redeemed, not like those who have wildly burst their fetters [*PC,* n. 1 (April 2, 1813)].

On April 26, Niebuhr received Hardenberg's call to conduct negotiations in Dresden with English deputies about Britain's subsidies. In n. 16 (April 28), he took his leave and announced that Johann Friedrich Ludwig Göschen would continue to run the newspaper. Reimer also left with the *Landwehr* (militia) in mid-May. Niebuhr's absence was longer than expected, so the publishing house could no longer financially sustain the newspaper. Schleiermacher took over the editorship on July 1, 1813, to support Reimer but immediately collided with the censor. Disappointed by the illiberal attitude of the government, Schleiermacher ended his editorial work on September 30 [Lettow-Vorbeck, I, pp. 132-257]. Arnim stepped in as newspaper editor from October 1, 1813, to January 31, 1814 [Lettow-Vorbeck, II, pp. 3-77].

Arnim as Editor of Der Preußische Correspondent

Following the *Zeitung für Einsiedler* in 1808 [Moering 2014], *Der Preußische Correspondent* is the second newspaper edited by Arnim. However, the two publications differ significantly in character and purpose. On October 5, 1806, just days before Napoleon defeated the Prussian army in the double battle of Jena and Auerstedt on October 14, 1806, Arnim had advertised his plan for a patriotic newspaper, *Der Preuße, ein Volksblatt*, in the *Allgemeine Anzeiger der Deutschen.* The project was immediately abandoned in the turmoil of the war and Arnim's departure to Königsberg, where he joined the royal family in exile.[11] Upon Arnim's return to Berlin and Heidelberg, Napoleon had established complete French dominance over Germany, putting publishers of oppositional works in mortal danger. Arnim joined his friend Clemens Brentano in Heidelberg, where they completed *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1805, 1808) and the short-lived *Zeitung für Einsiedler* (April to August 1808), both voices of the «Heidelberg Romantics», representing the efforts of the time to achieve a sense of national, particularly German identity through the rediscovery of old-

[11] *PC,* n. 267 (October 5, 1806), pp. 3291-3293; manuscript by his servant Frohreich, UB Heidelberg, n. Heid. 2110.5, pp. 191r-194r.

er German literature: Fairy tales, stories, songs, and poems are combined, and science and poetry intersect. Five years later, *Der Preußische Correspondent* offered another opportunity to realize what Arnim had envisioned in 1806: producing a patriotic paper that called Europe to arms against Napoleon, who had crushed and humiliated Prussia. Furthermore, he grasped the historical moment as a watershed, a chance to restructure the government and rebuild it as a constitutional monarchy, giving voice to its citizens.

Due to the Napoleonic occupation of Prussia and the enormous reparation payments, the Arnim estate, once flourishing, was impoverished, forcing Arnim to earn money to support his young family. True, the editorship was an employment opportunity, yet he wanted more than monetary compensation. As a member of the patriotic Prussian gentry, his foremost goal was to support the fight for freedom against Napoleonic oppression. Initially, he saw the Battle of Leipzig as the «German Battle». Once he recognized the extent of the nationalistic fervor that forged an alliance of almost all European nations, he renamed the «Volksschlacht» (Battle of the People) into «Völkerschlacht» (Battle of the Nations), a moniker that soon became the official designation of the famed encounter [*PC*, n. 117; see also Knaack 2010].

> The great Battle of the Nations (*Völkerschlacht*), which in four days of fighting from the 16th to the 19th of this month, re-established the freedom of the Germans (which had withstood all attacks since the Battle of Hermann until Napoleon) again for centuries, has not yet received a name because of its extent; we hardly know the names of the individual places where it was fought; we still lack more precise news of the Bohemian army, which is also said to have been in battle on the 17th. Until the heroes of the battle have determined the name of the battle, we will call it the German Battle and collect all the news that together can give an idea of these rich and mighty days; we call it the German Battle not only because it won the freedom of the German peoples from French politics, but because in the fire of it the German national spirit purified and showed itself, and the eternal law that unites peoples of one origin and language was brilliantly proven in the enlisting of most German fighters in the German army [*PC*, n. 117 (October 22), p. 1/1].

In n. 119 (October 25), he concludes the report of the battle with «and thus, the four-day Battle of the Nations (*Völkerschlacht*) before Leipzig decided the fate of the world» [*PC*, n. 119 (October 25), p. 2/2]. Again and again, he returns to the days in October to offer new political, philosophical, or religious perspectives, conceptualizing the atrocity of the massacre as part of a world that is fighting for the equilibrium of political powers that would grant peace and prosperity to its people through negotiations and interdependence.

While Niebuhr was militant, condemning the cruelty on the battlefield as 'French' atrocities, Arnim carefully distinguishes between Napoleon and the French people. This becomes particularly clear in his article on the Arch-Chancellor Karl Theodor Anton Maria von Dalberg (1744-1817), the Prince Primate of the Confederation of the Rhine (1806-1813), who had joined Napoleon as one of the client states established after the defeat of Austria and Russia in the Battle of Austerlitz (December 2, 1805) that dissolved the Holy Roman Empire. Although Arnim was critical of Dahlberg's subservience to Napoleon, he remembered him as an amiable and generous prelate and scholar, a notable patron of men of letters, and a friend of Goethe, Schiller, and Wieland [«Der Großherzog von Frankfurt», *PC*, n. 140 (December 1), p. 2/1]. Arnim's belief in reconciliation, mutual respect, and tolerance instead of retribution and retaliation after the final victory over Napoleon is expressed in several of his narratives in which he describes the consequences of human transgression in times of war. Exoneration and compassion fail in *Seltsames Begegnen und Wiedersehen* (Strange Encounter and Reunion 1817) but come to pass in *Der tolle Invalide auf dem Fort Ratonneau* (The Mad Invalid at Fort Ratonneau 1818).

Another one of Arnim's concerns was the drafting of a constitution in his case, specifically a Prussian one. Since Friedrich Wilhelm III had made a vague promise, there was hope, especially since the establishment of various constitutions was reported, such as the English one for Sicily, the Dutch one with the role of the future king, and above all, the Swiss one. Although the topic would alert the censor, the Swiss constitution was based on the earlier form of the Swiss Confederation, and a report on it was not objectionable. Perhaps this is the reason why the head of the police, Jakob Naudé, overlooked the fact that Arnim inserted his appeal for a constitution into his poem «Wiederum zum hohen Fest» (Again in praise of the High Feast) in *Der Preußische Correspondent* as an epilog to reports on Switzerland on January 26, 1814 – his birthday. Masked in the melody of the seemingly harmless student song *Gaudeamus igitur*, the 17th verse reads:

> Krieg zerstört den Eigensinn, / Lehrt im Ganzen leben, / Dann durchdringt des Ganzen Sinn / Die Verfassung mit Gewinn, / Wird Gesetze geben.
>
> [War destroys stubbornness, / Teaches you to live a full life, / Then the sense of completeness permeates all / and the constitution with benefit, / Will give laws.] [*PC*, n. 14 (January 26, 1814), pp. 3/2-4/2].

Conceived by its founders and approved by the Prussian government under the sharp pen of censorship, *Der Preußische Correspondent* became a publication representing the current historical moment of violence and upheaval

within a cultural-historical context. Under Arnim's hand, it also represented the writer's philosophy and poetic voice. In his address to his readers at the end of his tenure, he again sums up the project as he had envisioned it:

> […] in the face of the approaching doubtful events of the war, to communicate some confidence to the skeptic and some comfort to the faithful to combat the horrors of fear with dreams of good judgment, and to point from a noisy, distracting outside world to the necessary composure and disposition of our innermost being [*PC*, n. 17 (January 31, 1814)].

In a world that experienced daily atrocities, depravations, social upheaval, and death, Arnim's project seems, at first glance, hardly compatible with the usual daily newspaper business. However, from a closer look, it fits all the better into the poet's line of thought. With the essay and the edition of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* and the *Zeitung für Einsiedler* (1808), the contemporary history embedded in the framing narratives and the tales of his *Wintergarten* (1809), the endeavor to influence Prussia's cultural and political elite in the form of the *Deutsche Tischgesellschaft* (1811) [*Die Tischgesellschaft, WAA* 12], to the publication of the dramas of the *Schaubühne* (1813), [*Die Schaubühne* I, *WAA* 13], his artistic vision becomes clear: Impact on his readership, edification through culture and art, hope through imagination and encouragement, and commitment to the rise of national consciousness.

Arnim, the Translator

Arnim's time as editor can be divided into two periods: the first lasted until November 25, 1813, during which Niebuhr was absent from Berlin. The second period began on November 26, 1813, and ended on January 31, 1814, when Niebuhr contributed at least 21 signed articles. Arnim edited 70 main and several supplementary issues during his tenure, totaling about 800 articles and reports. Beginning October 3, 1813, to January 10, 1814, Arnim published fourteen bulletins issued by the Army of the North. He presumably translated ten announcements, one from the *Spenersche*, one from the *Vossische Zeitung*, and two from a fourth, unknown source. The original bulletins are written in French, as they were dictated or commissioned by Bernadotte during the campaign at the different headquarters. They are printed on single sheets with a header and are numbered. In his letter of November 18, 1813, to Reimer, Arnim complained that Ludwig Ernst Heinrich Konstantin Graf von Kalckreuth, who served under Bernadotte, «sends Swedish Bülltins, but it remains incomprehensible that Voss always receives them a few hours earlier, so it must be the fault of the person who receives the batch first and sends out the individual letters» [Steig 1894, I, p. 325]. Some of the bulletins are printed in full; sometimes paragraphs are omitted, and twice Arnim published

excerpts. Working more independently, Arnim published the translation in nine cases one day earlier than the others. Since the newspapers generally had their own translators, editors took over from one another.[12] In addition to the bulletins, four translations from the *Moniteur universel* and five from the *Journal de l'Empire* can be attributed to Arnim, who was fluent in French. It could not be determined whether three English translations from *The London Gazette* and two each from the *Times* and the *Courier de Londres* were by Arnim or Niebuhr. Since Niebuhr was fluent in English, it is safe to name him as a translator.

Giving his readership access to a foreign text, predominantly when it instigates emotions and stirs their hearts with patriotic fervor, Arnim inserted the translation of a Russian bulletin issued on Alexander I's birthday that rewarded his soldiers with a medal for their service.

> Soldiers! The great and remarkable year in which you, in an unheard-of and exemplary manner, threw down and punished the raging, strong enemy who dared to tread the soil of our fatherland. This incredible year is over, but your brilliant victories and heroic deeds, which you have accomplished, do not pass away or fall silent: posterity will keep them in its memory. With your blood, you have saved the fatherland from the many nations and powers that had united against it. Your perseverance and wounds have earned you the gratitude of your country and the respect of foreign monarchs. By your courage and bravery, you have shown the world that in a country where God and religion dwell in the hearts of the people, although the enemy's army would be equal to the waves of the ocean, you have forced them out and crushed them, like against a hard, unshakeable rock. Nothing remains but the groans and moans of doom from all their fury and frenzy.[13]

Of equal impact were personal letters that described battle scenes or the days before the demise of a mortally wounded combatant. Moreau's letter to his wife [*PC*, n. 121 (October 29), pp. 4/1-4/2] and Maria Christiane Eleonore Prochaska's notes to her brother [*PC*, n. 113 (October 15), pp. 3/1-4/1] were printed verbatim in several papers. Whereas Moreau was a prominent figure, Prochaska made history when she disguised herself as a man and fought in the famous *Jägerbattailon* of the Lützow Free Corps under the name of August Renz, first serving as a drummer and later in the infantry. Severely wounded in the Battle of Göhrde, the field surgeons discovered that she was a woman and took her to Dannenberg, where she died three weeks later.

---

[12] The original bulletins are housed in the Fischbach Archive of the Hessian State Archives in Darmstadt under the call number 34/5.

[13] *PC*, n. 106 (October 3), p. 4/1. The piece became the source for several newspapers. [Knaack 2012, p. 236].

Congreve's incendiary rocket was of great interest in modern weaponry. It was used for the first time in a major battle and proved devastating to the combatants. On September 30, the *Spenersche Zeitung* mentioned the rocket in their report on the occupation of Wittenberg: «We are eager to learn about the effect of the Congreve incendiary rockets», [*Spenersche Zeitung,* n. 11]. Arnim's detailed description, taken from an anonymous source [Anonymous 1813], was reprinted in most of the contemporary papers and books and remained relevant as the entry for the rocket in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Realencyclopädie* and the *Conversations-Lexikon* [*PC,* n. 105, p. 2/1].

Arnim, the Narrator

Only two of his texts are identified by his name. In a short note on Niebuhr's return on November 26, 1813, and his farewell text *An die Leser* (To my Readers) on January 31, 1814, Arnim identified his contributions in more detail: «Submitted in n. 8 on the presumed strength of the French army, in n. 112, the collection of letters from the Westphalian Archive; in N. 125, the lists of prisoners and cannons; in n. 133 on the Christian societies in London; all other essays, characterizations, advertisements, anecdotes, and poems, which do not have another name or initial letter or can easily be distinguished as news reports from correspondents or newspapers, are mine […]», [*PC*, n. 17 (January 31, 1814), p. 4/]. All in all, Arnim published 69 articles, three reviews, and four poems.[14]

Arnim's anecdotes, illustrating the heroism of individual soldiers and the fate of the common man; his poems, expressing his emotions about the liberation and his hope for a better world; and his personal narratives of the most critical moments in the history of the wars represent him as the «Erzähler» (narrator) of the stories of losses, sacrifices, and destruction, but also bravery, endurance, and faith in a new world order after bitterly divisive times.

To add more color to the historical account, the translation of a Russian Bulletin in *PC* 106 is followed by a fictional «Appeal of a Russian to the Prussians»:

> Appeal of a Russian to the Prussian lands beyond the Elbe. When our victories had driven the enemy of the world from our borders and destroyed his armies, we learned from the fury of his soldiers against him, from the joy of his fellow citizens about the misfortune that had befallen him, the full extent of the misery into which his madness had plunged Europe. […] The days of retribution and judgment have come, arise, ye bowed down, and tread your foreign tyrants and those who sold themselves to them into dust,

[14] Identified and listed in Burwick, Knaack, Moering 2025 by the editors.

> learn war in the line of your brothers, the practiced and proven Prussians, you shall richly repay the French as they have done to you. Your disgrace lasted but a few years; you will soon wipe it out in deeds; remember your glorious past; Germany is invincible when united in conviction and faith; look around you; adversity has destroyed all envy and hatred that once divided the peoples of Germany [*PC*, n. 107 (October 4), pp. 3/1-3/2].

Whereas Bernadotte did not fight on the battlefield, Blücher and Alexander I joined their troops in disregard of the mortal danger, as the death of Moreau proved, whose leg was shot off while he consulted with Alexander in the field. Consequently, reports focused more on the general's actions than on the common soldier's courage. It is, therefore, noteworthy that Arnim represented the political as well as philosophical discourse about war, promises, and deceit, but also bravery by those who fought on the battlefield in a fictional «Last Letter of a Volunteer», describing the reckoning of a dying soldier about his ideology, patriotism, and experiences in hand-to-hand combat.

> […] You know that a political opinion led me to take up arms, but among the arms, I found my fatherland and my people, which I had missed for so long and sought in vain. Now I wonder how I and my modest brothers have forgotten everything I once thought. Necessity has put us spiritually in line with each other; I have learned a lot, and I wish they could use what they learned from me. […] Freedom from suffering and joy now requires a hero to lead us all, a life as a whole, a surrender to death. All of this, time demands now, and this last devotion has become mine alone; I die unglorified, but not uselessly; I have lived for the common good (das Ganze), and soon I shall live with it. God forgets no one in his last distress who has not forgotten the distress of his fatherland; – I still have much to say to you – farewell, die freely and willingly – I call out with Gustav Adolf: Almighty God will not live less when I die![15]

To incentivize his readership, Arnim inserted a piece on the liberation of Tyrol by reminding them of the Tyrolian uprising against Napoleon under Andreas Hofer that began on April 9, 1809, in the Tyrolean capital of Innsbruck. Hofer was captured and executed on February 20, 1810. The liberation of Tyrol, to which Arnim added Maximilian von Schenkendorf's poem «Als der Sandwirth von Passeyer / Inspruck hat im Sturm genommen» (when the Sand-Innkeeper of Passey took Innsbruck by storm), was in contrast to

[15] «Letzter Brief eines Freiwilligen» (Last letter of a Volunteer), *PC*, n. 114 (October 16), pp. 3/2-4/1.

Arnim's version reported in an abbreviated and matter-of-fact version in the *Vossische Zeitung.*[16]

> Tyrol is free! Whose heart does not beat more joyfully at this news, which country deserved more to be restored to its beloved old master, to its old free constitution, than this one, which first among all German peoples gave a bloody example of the strength that loyalty and faith bestow, it has proven that peoples cannot be exchanged and handed over like a commodity, but that anyone who wants to possess them against their will must destroy them. […] Twenty thousand Tyrolians have since risen, sought out the buried and hidden rifles, and armed themselves with them; they have already taken Brixen, three hundred Frenchmen captured with two cannons, they have already occupied the Brenner Pass and the one near Stürzen, they are praying on their rocks for the noble little band of their countrymen who have gathered with us and are bravely fighting for us. Had the magnificent Hofer only lived to see this time![17]

Arnim is the historian who documents the war with the bulletins and reports dictated or penned by the representatives of the alliance, Bernadotte, Alexander I, or General Blücher. He is the reporter who shows the military, political, and human sides of a war that cost the lives of millions of soldiers and citizens, devastated their towns, and destroyed their livelihoods. He is the narrator who complements the factual reports with fictional pieces that tell the story from a particular perspective. And it is just as important to describe the joy that drove people onto the streets after French rule had ended and a new beginning was promised. What distinguishes his reporting from the official military documentation is his empathy and sense of humor when he describes the everyday lives of the soldiers and citizens. Inspired by his cultural-political philosophy, expressed in his oeuvre, he left his imprint on *Der Preußische Correspondent* by motivating the public, enriching it with culture and art, cheering it up, and giving it hope. His parting words sum up his goal, his commitment, and his appreciation for the reception of his work in the other dailies of the time:

> […] what I presented to my contemporaries in seriousness and jest was echoed in the most diverse papers; I recognize with thanks the kind reception.

---

[16] «Tyrol is free! The Bavarian government does well; its troops and officials leave Tyrol after an agreement with Austria. Twenty thousand Tyrolians have since risen up, sought out the buried and hidden rifles, and armed themselves with them. They had already taken Brixen, captured 300 Frenchmen with 2 cannons, and occupied the Brenner Pass and the pass at Stürzen», [*Vossische Zeitung,* n. 121 (October 9), p. 5].

[17] *PC*, n. 109 (October 8), pp. 3/2-4/1. Tyrol became again a part of Austria.

Der Preußische Correspondent became a daily newspaper characterized by its editor's personality. It differed from other European press organs, especially the long-established Berlin dailies, the *Vossische Zeitung* and the *Spenersche Zeitung*. In other words, Arnim presented a history of the Wars of Liberation that was distinctive in the contemporary print media and could not be found in conventional history books.

Bibliography

Anonymous (1813): *Abbildung und Beschreibung der Congreveschen Brand-Racketen, so wie solche im Monat August 1807 bei der Belagerung von Copenhagen wie auch in dem Kriege 1813 von den Engländern gebraucht worden sind.* Mit 1 illum. Kupfer. Zweite Auflage. Leipzig, in der Baumgärtnerschen Buchhandlung.

Bockholt, E. (2004): *Der europäische Bund. Eine gescheiterte Vision der Freiheitskriege? Studien zur deutschen Publizistik 1813/1814,* Diss. Berlin.

Brockhaus, H. E. (1872): *Friedrich Arnold Brockhaus. Sein Leben und Wirken nach Briefen und anderen Aufzeichnungen geschildert*, vol. 1, Leipzig, Brockhaus.

Burwick, R., Dickson, S., Ehrlich, L., Härtl, H., Moering, R., Ricklefs, U.†, Wingertszahn, C., eds, (2000ff.): *Ludwig Achim von Arnim. Werke und Briefwechsel. Historisch-kritische Weimarer Arnim-Ausgabe*, Tübingen, Niemeyer; Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter.

— (2007): *Ludwig Achim von Arnim. Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften I.* Burwick, R., Dickson, S., Ehrlich, L., Härtl, H., Moering, R., Ricklefs, U.†, Wingertszahn, C., eds, (2000ff.): *Ludwig Achim von Arnim. Werke und Briefwechsel. Historisch-kritische Weimarer Arnim-Ausgabe*, voll. 2/1 and 2/2. Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter.

— (2020): *Ludwig Achim von Arnim. Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften II.* Burwick, R., Dickson, S., Ehrlich, L., Härtl, H., Moering, R., Ricklefs, U.†, Wingertszahn, C., eds, (2000ff.): *Ludwig Achim von Arnim. Werke und Briefwechsel. Historisch-kritische Weimarer Arnim-Ausgabe*, voll. 3/1, 3/2 and 3/3, Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter.

Burwick, R., Knaack, J., Moering, R., eds (2025): *Ludwig Achim von Arnim. Der Preußische Correspondent.* Burwick, R., Dickson, S., Ehrlich, L., Härtl, H., Moering, R., Ricklefs, U.†, Wingertszahn, C., eds., (2000ff.): *Ludwig Achim von Arnim. Werke und Briefwechsel. Historisch-kritische Weimarer Arnim-Ausgabe*, vol. 12, Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter.

Czygan, P. (1909-1911): *Zur Geschichte der Tagesliteratur während der Freiheitskriege,* 2 voll., Leipzig.

Dreyhaus, H. (1909): *Der Preußische Correspondent von 1813/14 und der Anteil seiner Gründer Niebuhr und Schleiermacher.* Diss. Marburg.

Ehrlich, L. (2024): «Die Gründung der Weimarer Arnim-Ausgabe», in *Neue Zeitung für Einsiedler*, vol. 17, pp. 155-174.

Härtl, H. (1983): «Zwischen Tilsit und Tauroggen. Briefe Achim von Arnims an seinen Bruder Carl Otto von Arnim 1807-1812. Mit einem Briefwechsel Achim von Arnims und Wilhelm von Humboldts als Anhang», in *Impulse. Aufsätze, Quellen, Berichte zur deutschen Klassik und Romantik*, Folge 6, Berlin, Weimar, Böhlau, pp. 252-343.
Härtl, H. (1990): «Briefe Arnims an Brentano aus dem Arnim-Nachlaß des Goethe-und Schiller-Archivs. Mit zwei Gegenbriefen Brentanos an Arnim und einem Brief Arnims an Niebuhr als Anhang», in Burwick R., Fischer B., eds. *Neue Tendenzen der Arnim-Forschung*, Bern, Peter Lang, pp. 120-197.
Henke, A. C. H. (1814): *Darstellung des Feldzuges der Verbündeten im Jahr 1813. Voran eine kurze Uebersicht des Feldzuges Napoleons gegen Rußland im Jahr 1812*, 2 voll., Erlangen, Palm.
Knaack, J. (1976): *Achim von Arnim – Nicht nur Poet,* Darmstadt, Thesen Verlag, Vowinckel.
— (2000): «Achim von Arnim und der 'Preußische Correspondent'», in U. Ricklefs, ed. *Universelle Entwürfe – Integration – Rückzug. Arnims Berliner Zeit (1809-1814). Wiepersdorfer Kolloquium der Internationlen Arnim-Gesellschaft* (IAG), Tübingen, Niemeyer Verlag, pp. 133-141.
— (2001): «Der Preußische Correspondent und die Spenersche Zeitung in den Jahren 1813 und 1814», in W. Pape, ed. *Arnim und die Berliner Romantik: Kunst, Literatur und Politik. Berliner Kolloquium der IAG*, Tübingen, Niemeyer Verlag, pp. 41-51.
— (2004/2005): «Arnim und Niebuhr. Ein gespanntes Verhältnis», in *Neue Zeitung für Einsiedler* 4/5. pp. 21-41.
— (2010): «Wie die 'Völkerschlacht' bei Leipzig 1813 zu ihrem Namen kam», in Dietzsch, S., Ludwig A., eds. *Achim von Arnim und sein Kreis. Festschrift Heinz Härtl,* Berlin, New York, De Gruyter, pp. 269-278.
— (2012): *Die Emotionalisierung der Berichterstattung im Preußischen Correspondenten durch Achim von Arnim,* in A. Arnold, W. Pape, eds, *Emotionen in der Romantik. Repräsentation, Ästhetik, Inszenierung. Schriften der Internationalen Arnim-Gesellschaft*, vol. 9, Berlin, New York, De Gruyter, pp. 233-242.
— (2021): *Alles geschieht in der Welt der Poesie wegen. Leben und Werk des Achim von Arnim,* Wiesbaden, Reichert Verlag, pp. 157-173.
Lehmann, M. (1887): *Scharnhorst. Zweiter Theil. Seit dem Tilsiter Frieden,* Leipzig, S. Hirzel.
Lettow-Vorbeck, M. V. (1911): *Zur Geschichte des Preußischen Correspondenten von 1813 und 1814*, 2 voll. (*Historische Studien*; Heft XCV), Lübeck, Ludwig Mathiesen Verlag.
Meyer, P. A. G. (1858-1869): *Corpus Juris Confoederationis Germanicae oder Staatsacten für Geschichte und öffentliches Recht des Deutschen Bundes,* Teil 1, Staatsverträge, Frankfurt am Main, S. Boselli.

Moering, R., ed. (2014): *Ludwig Achim von Arnim. Zeitung für Einsiedler*. Burwick, R., Dickson, S., Ehrlich, L., Härtl, H., Moering, R., Ricklefs, U.†, Wingertszahn, C., eds (2000ff.): *Ludwig Achim von Arnim. Werke und Briefwechsel. Historisch-kritische Weimarer Arnim-Ausgabe*, voll. 6/1 and 6/2, Tübingen, Niemeyer; Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter.
Nienhaus, S. ed. (2008): *Die Deutsche Tischgesellschaft,* R. Burwick, S. Dickson, L. Ehrlich, H. Härtl, R. Moering, U. Ricklefs, C., †Wingertszahn C eds (2000ff.): *Ludwig Achim von Arnim. Werke und Briefwechsel. Historisch-kritische Weimarer Arnim-Ausgabe*, vol. 12, Tübingen: Niemeyer; Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter.
Pietsch, Y. ed. (2010): *Die Schaubühne I.* Burwick, R., Dickson, S., Ehrlich, L., Härtl, H., Moering, R., Ricklefs, U.†, Wingertszahn, C., eds., (2000ff.): *Ludwig Achim von Arnim. Werke und Briefwechsel. Historisch-kritische Weimarer Arnim-Ausgabe*, vol. 13. Tübingen: Niemeyer; Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter.
Plotho, C. v. (1817): *Der Krieg in Deutschland und Frankreich in den Jahren 1813 und 1814,* vol. 1, Attachment XXIV. Berlin, Karl Friedrich Amelang.
Ricklefs, U. (1987): «Anmerkungen zum Projekt einer historisch-kritischen Gesamtausgabe der Werke und Briefe Ludwig Achim von Arnims," in *Editio. Internationales Jahrbuch für Editionswissenschaften* 1, pp. 209-223.
Spies, H.-B. ed. (1981): *Die Erhebung gegen Napoleon 1806-1814/15.* (*Quellen zum politischen Denken der Deutschen im 19. und 20. Jhd. Freiherr vom Stein-Gedächtnisausgabe*. Founded by Rudolf Bucher and continued by Winfried Baumgart, vol. 2), Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
Steig, R. ed. (1894): *Achim von Arnim und Clemens Brentano,* Stuttgart, Cotta.
Widdecke, E. (1825): *Geschichte der Haude- und Spenerschen Zeitung. 1734–1874,* Berlin, Haude & Spener.
Wolfes, M. (2004): «Schleiermacher als politischer Publizist: Die Herausgabe des Preußischen Correspondenten», in *Öffentlichkeit und Bürgergesellschaft: Friedrich Schleiermachers politische Wirksamkeit. Schleiermacher-Studien*, vol. 1. (*Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte,* vol. 85.1/2), Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter, pp. 375-544.

Disability and Gender in Wartime: Mary Darby Robinson's *The Natural Daughter*. A Case Study

Abstract

This essay focuses on Robinson's last novel, *The Natural Daughter*, published in 1799 and set in England and France during the French Revolutionary Wars. Through a close reading of selected excerpts, an in-depth examination of the text will be carried out to retrace Robinson's stance on war and her interpretation of war repercussions on marginalised subjects, such as the poor, women and disabled people. Interestingly and ahead of her time, her novel features an intersectional perspective that considers gender, social class and disability, presenting a reality where politics and war do not equally impact all citizens. Starting from Robinson's proto-feminist standpoint, the analysis will closely investigate three main interrelated arguments: the social inequalities generated by conflicts, the disabling and deforming powers of war, and the reconstruction of a microhistory (and a micro*her*story) of warfare. This latter theme will be essential to outline in Robinson's text an innovative and inclusive narrative that enables outcasts and silenced subjects to reclaim their agency and position as protagonists of history.

Valentina Pramaggiore

The Natural Daughter. With Portraits of the Leadenhead Family is Mary Darby Robinson's seventh and last novel, published in 1799, the year before her untimely death. Despite a title that evokes the typical eighteenth-century novel of sensibility while hinting at possible scandals and intrigues [Setzer 1997, p. 535] — a calculated appeal to contemporary market preferences — the novel artfully blends traditional and subversive elements. These elements cleverly address social, political and gender issues from the author's proto-feminist perspective. With its many plot twists, pivotal topics and possible interpretations, the text is as multifaceted as Robinson herself, whose presence permeates the entire narration. Indeed, as Eleanor Ty underlines, «a work such as *The Natural Daughter* can also be read as a woman's social inscription of the self, functioning as a testament of Robinson's multifarious subjectivity» [1998, p. 83]. This essay explores the fascinating mixture of crucial topics presented in the novel, focusing on Robinson's

reflections on war and social inequalities regarding disability and gender. The examination will address how, through the development of a dynamic plot and multi-layered characters, Robinson narrates a well-rounded *her*story[1] of such a complex warfare period, valorising the voices and struggles of marginalised subjects, while making herself and her political stances heard.

The story of *The Natural Daughter* develops from 1792 to 1794, mainly between Britain and France, and captures the first years of the Revolutionary Wars and the Terror. Although not strictly a historical novel[2] as it was set only seven to five years before its publication, Robinson's plot intertwines extensively with historical events. History is not mere background scenery where real and fictitious characters move undisturbed but represents the driving force behind the entire narration. Similarly to most of her coeval British citizens, Robinson's characters live amidst the disruptions of war, with its tragedies shaping their quotidian existences, changing their plans and bringing along its tragic consequences. Sharon Setzer defines the novel as a combination of a «daring excursion into the Godwinian genre of "fictitious history" and a pioneering venture into the realm of metafiction» [1997, p. 532] as the protagonist, Martha is crafted to be Robinson's «fictional double» [p. 532]. The text draws from the author's personal experiences, combining «fictionalised revolutionary history with fictionalised autobiography» [p. 532]. Anticipating feminist philosopher Hélène Cixous's advice, Robinson skilfully wrote «herself into the text – as into the world and into history» [Cixous 1976, p. 875]. She employed her pen to voice her political stances against patriarchal society and the values it implicitly supported: war and subjugation, despotic governments and tyrannical households, women's and outcasts' oppression and discrimination.

Robinson's life, like that of many of her coeval writers, mingled considerably with the conflicts that characterised the eighteenth century. Her father, Nicholas Darby, and longtime lover, Sir Banastre Tarleton, served respectively in the British Navy and Army during the American Revolutionary War. Robinson was in France with Tarleton in 1783 when the Anglo-French war ended, and it was on that occasion that she had an incident that left her permanently disabled.[3]

[1] The term *her*story is here employed to highlight how Robinson recounts events through female protagonists' perspectives, thus giving space and value to standpoints and situations usually erased from official historiography.

[2] In *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, Margaret Drabble defines Historical Novel as «a novel set in a period before the birth of the author» [1985, p. 463].

[3] Her *Memoirs* and biographers differ on the cause of her disability. Her *Memoirs* blame a cold night she spent in front of an open window which caused her a rheumatic fever, while most of her biographers tend to consider the fever as a complication of a miscarriage she suffered during the journey. From that moment on, Robinson lost the use of her limbs and travelled mostly to thermal towns around Europe to find relief from her chronic pain.

In September 1792, the battles taking place in the Flanders between the French and Austrian armies disrupted her trip to the healing waters of Spa in Belgium, forcing her to stop in France when the massacres in Paris occurred. There, she witnessed the beginning of the French Revolutionary Wars and managed to escape from Calais only a few hours before a decree for the arrest of all British citizens on French soil was issued.[4] These experiences left an indelible mark on her work.

War, «as a common experience shared by all Britons» [Emsley 1979, p. 4] but also «the single most important fact of British life between 1793 to 1815» [Bennett 1979, p. 9], became one of the main subjects of poetic and prose compositions. Although «the twenty-six years from the fall of the Bastille to Waterloo was a period of almost unremitting war» [p. 30], the Revolutionary Wars, «conducted on a global stage and engaging most of Europe, were seen as unprecedented» [Bainbridge 2003, p. 5]. Unsurprisingly, also the extent to which British poets responded to war activities was unprecedented in British history [Bennett 1979, p. 1]. Among the many writers who recounted such a long period of wartime and whose families were involved in the conflicts,[5] Mary Robinson represents a fascinating case study. Her extremely varied literary production often dealt with war and war-related topics: it is not uncommon to find the popular tropes of «the beggar, the orphan, the widow, the sailor and soldier and veteran» [p. 47] as characters in her poems and novels. However, while Robinson was brilliant at adapting her compositions to the most marketable genres and subjects, as literature was her principal source of income, her narrative of war was not conceived as a mere marketing strategy. As it will be shown, her perspective on, and representation of, warfare in *The Natural Daughter* constantly combines political, social and gender issues, disclosing her strong political engagement, her criticism of society, and her most reformative nature.

The novel opens with the description of a wealthy family on its way to Bath, «the most popular and fashionable English spa of the time» [Farese 2022, p. 44], in order for the father, Peregrine Bradford, to cure his gout in the town's healing waters. The Bradford family also includes Mrs Bradford and her daughters Julia and Martha, who are immediately introduced as two opposite young women. Martha is honest and sensible, while Julia is spoiled

[4] Such accurate information is retrieved from her *Memoirs*. See References.

[5] Jordan and Rogers pinpoint that no less than one in four families was involved in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic War [1989, p. 217] and Simon Bainbridge notes that «it is striking how many of the women writers of the period, including Charlotte Smith, Jane Austen and Felicia Hemans, had husbands, brothers or sons who fought in the wars. Even for those without relatives involved in the war, its presence was evident in everyday life in a huge range of forms» [2003, p. 6].

and excessively sensitive. The family dynamic – dominated by Mr. Bradford's tyrannical authority – illustrates the typical patriarchal structure of the upper-middle-class households of the time. Mr. Bradford is neither a clever man nor a loving father, especially towards Martha, who is devoted but strong-willed and does not comply with her parents' expectations. Martha is a fascinating character who, as mentioned above, mirrors the author herself in both her past struggles and the happier future she wished she had. Martha conveys Robinson's thoughts and political stances throughout the narration and embodies the same virtues and talents the author proved to have. Just like the author, she marries a man, Mr. Morley, who is not worthy of her trust. She is forced to be economically independent once her husband abandons her and ends up supporting herself by becoming a professional actress and writer. Such professions, regarded as unproper for a lady, will damage her reputation and induce her family to disavow her, making her a social outcast. However, unlike Robinson, Martha will have a happy ending and a financially secure future. After a long series of misadventures and the death of her husband, she will inherit half of his fortune and marry a wealthy and loving man, Lord Francis Sherville.

Despite the ordinary opening, the war enters the narration right from the beginning of the novel. It is depicted as nothing short of a disabling[6] entity, capable of maiming bodies and annihilating lives, as well as deforming people and societies. The first and more explicit reflection on war and its disabling powers emerges after a few pages and is voiced by Martha while the Bradford family travels to the thermal town. Along the way, the party meets a beggar who is introduced as «a lame soldier» addressing the travellers and showing his right arm, «which had been withered in the service of his country» [Robinson 2003, pp. 101-102]. Robinson does not add any further information about when and where he served as a soldier but straightforwardly highlights what deforming consequences being involved in the war had on the man's body and life. The choice to omit specific references can be interpreted as a political stance to prove a point that could be relevant to any armed conflict. We can presume Robinson's intention from other texts of hers penned around the same period, in which we can retrace the same approach to warfare. In «The Deserted Cottage», published in 1800 in the poetry collection *Lyrical Tales,* the presence of a devastating war permeates the whole composition. Nonetheless, the term «war» is mentioned just once, and which war caused death and destruction is never explicitly stated [Pramaggiore 2019, p. 116].

[6] The term «disabling» is here employed in a broader sense, not only related to a physical condition but rather to the idea of making someone or something unable to function properly. To further investigate the meaning of the term «disabled» across the centuries, see Joshua, 2020; Turner, 2012.

The encounter with the beggar, besides being a popular literary trope of the period and a common occurrence in everyday life,[7] can be seen as an ingenious strategy to address the topic of war straightforwardly. Such an event contrasts significantly with the image of the bourgeoise family going on vacation. The peace of an ordinary activity is abruptly interrupted by the sight of physical deformity, which implicitly fosters questions of welfare, social order, «morals, ethics and manners» [Turner 2012, p. 86] cleverly addressed by the author through her characters' stances. Mr Bradford expresses his disgust at the sight of a mutilated man begging for money, regarding it as an unproper exhibition of the man's infirmity and poverty. On the contrary, Martha advocates for the soldier's right to beg – and to show people how the war deformed his body – since he went to battle to protect their country.

> «He did but beg» said Martha.
> «What else could he do?» cried her father
> «He might have robbed […] or he would perhaps have starved», said Martha.
> «No matter! Of what use is a lame soldier?» said Mr. Bradford.
> «Of infinite use, if only to remind the wealthy of their obligations», said Martha.
> «What do we owe to them?»
> «All that we possess that is truly valuable — private safety and national honour» [Robinson 2003, p. 102].

War is thus indirectly portrayed not only as the cause of the man's lameness but also of his poverty. The mention of robbing and starving, presented as the only two alternatives to begging, exemplifies Robinson's criticism towards the lack of social welfare, which could lead to criminal activities. It was the case of the stereotypical mischievous «"cripple" beggar» [Turner 2012, p. 61] devoted to thefts and aggressions. The cultural representation of the disabled subject as unworthy of trust was quite popular and often perpetrated as part of a «broader pool of images of the deviousness and criminality of the [male] poor» in search of revenge on the rich and physically whole [p. 62]. It should be noted that the issue of beggars and crime as a consequence of the war, as well as their perception as deceitful figures, were not a result of the warfare period that characterised the second half of the eighteenth century but rather an unresolved, long-standing matter that degenerated. In this regard, if it is true that «after the French wars disbanded sailors were said to be the largest

[7] The phenomenon of beggars was a sizeable problem throughout the eighteenth century and increased especially at the end of wars. As David M. Turner pinpoints: «Evidence presented to the Parliamentary Select Committee on the state of mendacity in the metropolis, in 1815 […], put the total number of beggars at 15,000» [Turner 2012, p. 83].

group of beggars in London for a period of years»[8] [Hay 1982, p. 139], it is noteworthy that, already in 1744, a Vagrancy Act gave discharged soldiers and seamen the possibility to beg on the British roads «provided they could prove their bona fides» [p. 95].

The themes of disability and impoverishment were very dear to Mary Robinson since they reflected her unfortunate condition. Robinson spent the last years of her life in a state of constant physical pain, often confined to bed and compelled to rely on the help of her daughter and her servants for most everyday occupations. In addition, despite the tireless exertion of her mind and her ceaseless publications, she was regularly chased by creditors and «thrown into a debtor's prison only months before she died» [Brewer 2016, p. 107]. Her correspondence with Mr. James Marshal from August to November 1800 – before she passed away in December – portrays a precarious financial situation, made even more helpless by her physical condition.[9] The two disadvantages for Robinson were inextricably linked, as one strongly affected the other. When her illness prevented her from writing and publishing, the consequential lack of financial security made her feel even more disabled. As Brewer reminds us:

> she regarded herself as abled as long as her financial resources and caregivers permitted her to have a social life, write prolifically, and visit London's cultural sites. Constantly harassed by debt-collectors, she considered her poverty a more serious impairment than her lameness [Brewer 2016, p. 107].

The veteran thus epitomises the socially marginalised subject that Robinson herself felt she was in that moment of her life: their non-conformed bodies made them unable to work and provide for themselves. Mr. Bradford's dismissive remarks – «What else could he do? / Of what use is a lame soldier? / What do we owe to them?» – exemplifies the ableist mindset that pervaded society and relegated disabled people to the margins as mere stereotypes. His words unveil the social stigma on physically deformed bodies and the implications this had on their lives and their cultural representation [Bradshaw 2016; Joshua 2020; Turner 2012]. In a further passage, Martha replies to her father, saying that the soldier's wound «is not fictitious» to stress that he was not lying about his condition. Fake lameness, especially when enacted by beggars, was a cause of pervasive anxiety among people, enhanced by the stereotypical narration of fake cripples committing violent crimes [Turner 2012, p. 61].

[8] Douglas Hay quotes the *Fourth Report of the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity* [London 1822, p. 6].

[9] The letters are included in Sharon M. Setzer, ed., *Original Letters of the Celebrated Mrs. Mary Robinson*. See References.

Through Martha's voice, Robinson pinpoints that disability was «exposed as a stigma on humanity» [Robinson 2003, p. 102], highlighting all the social preconceptions the veteran (and the author herself) had to endure. Way ahead of time, Robinson implicitly suggests a social model of disability[10] in which, if the war was the cause of the man's physical impairment, it was society itself which disabled him.[11]

The author was very much aware that society played an essential role in the creation of disability, as it linked a person's value to their social utility and productivity, according to the standards of the bourgeoise community. As argued by Mitchell and Snyder, «the burgeoning bodily ideal [was] symmetrical, fully functional, independent […] and increasingly identified as a representative of the "healthy nation" in the eighteenth century» [Mitchell and Snyder 2006, p. 1389]. Nevertheless, Robinson does not fail to remark on the peculiar and sadly ironic condition of mutilated veterans. Sent to fight to defend their country and infirmed because of their actions in battle, wounded soldiers lost their social value as soon as they were no longer useful and productive. It should not be forgotten that their wounds also symbolically represented the fragility of the body and the weakness of the nation at war, and thus, were better hidden away from sight. Robinson explicitly addresses and criticises this contradictory attitude towards veterans through the soldier himself, who says that his only home is his country and «that proves to be but a comfortless one» [Robinson 2003, p. 102].

Interestingly, Robinson also explores the intersection of class and war. She addresses the theme of social inequalities not only as related to disability and the inability to provide for oneself but also as a matter of «distributions of fortune» [Robinson 2003, p. 102]. The term «fortune» is probably a well-thought-out choice since it both meant wealth and luck. Although we can assume that, in this context, she was referring to a distribution of richness among social classes, we cannot exclude she was also hinting at a strict connection between prosperity and fate. When Mr. Bradford rhetorically asks his daughter, «What are their [soldier's] lives in comparison with the wealth of kingdoms?» [Robinson 2003, p. 102], he implicitly makes a distinction between valuable/wealthy and valueless/poor people. Conveying the author's ideals, Martha's answer gets straight to the point of class discrimination as she pinpoints that «the poor wounded soldier, with his rags and mendicity, has still one badge which gold cannot purchase — honour» [Robinson 2003, p. 102]. It should

[10] The «social model of disability» was named and theorised by disability scholar Mike Oliver in 1981 following the new social interpretation of disability given by UPIAS (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation) in 1976.

[11] *Impairment* is here used to indicate «a bodily condition that limits function» while the term *disability* is employed to define «the disadvantages associated with» that impairment. See Joshua 2020, p. 19.

be noted that simple soldiers were frequently men from the lower classes who voluntarily enrolled because they lacked means of support, especially during years of «dearth and trade depression»[12] [Hay 1982, p. 141]. Those men rarely became high-ranked officials or admirals. They frequently died in service or were quickly paid off at the end of the conflict and sent home to become vagrants in a country that did not need them, especially when wounded, because the «labour market […] was chronically over-supplied, especially later in the century» [Robinson 2003, p. 141]. Robinson was well aware of this critical situation and employed her pen to denounce the absence of social welfare and the shortage of compassion and charity towards marginalised subjects from wealthier people. Mr. Bradford's complete absence of empathy for the veteran, despite his own impairment and his wealthy status, is the epitome of society's indifference towards outcasts and people in need Robinson was so critical about. That is why, with a kind rebellious gesture, Martha provides the beggar with a room for the night and a proper meal, counterbalancing her father's (and society's) behaviour and proving a more inclusive and compassionate approach. As Brewer underlines:

> In her poetry and fiction, Robinson calls for the vicissitudes of the disabled to be addressed by private charity and «filial piety» […] She either implicitly or explicitly urges rich men and women to regard the wounded veteran as a brother who deserves aid and compassion [Brewer 2016, p. 121].

Robinson concludes the passage with a poem titled «The Old Soldier»[13], fictionally attributed to Martha, who could not avoid thinking about the «wounded beggar» [Robinson 2003, p. 103]. The poetic composition skillfully encapsulates Robinson's criticism of war and the doomed fate of its veterans. The elegy memorializes a soldier sent to fight in a foreign land where he endured harsh conditions and ultimately died. Though the soldier proved his bravery on the battlefield, he longed for his native land and his loved ones. Praised by the poet throughout the first three stanzas, the soldier does not receive similar acclaim at home, where «the lasting wreath of fame» [Robinson 2003, p. 104] fails to await him as it should. Instead, glory and fame are reserved for a more

[12] As Hay reports: «West Country weavers (according to Henry Fielding) joined the Army in 1742, a year of depression and high prices; buckle chapemakers in Staffordshire were said in 1760 to have enlisted in large numbers; the unemployed nailers of the county, particularly single men, were reported to be doing the same in the appalling year of 1812» [1982, p. 141]. For more on the matter, see: Douglas Hay, «War, Dearth and Theft in Eighteenth Century: The Records of the English Courts», pp. 117-160.

[13] The poem was penned by Robinson and published in *The Morning Post* on the 31st of August 1799, as clarified by Sharon M. Setzer in her edited version of *The Natural Daughter*, p. 104.

fortunate (likely wealthier, but surely luckier) man, while the old soldier is destined to die without public recognition.

> Who, when the deafening din is done,
> So well deserves as Valour's son,
> The proud, the lasting wreath of fame,
> To grace his name?
> […]
> Hard is his fate […]
> To know, the laurel he has won
> Twines round the brow of FORTUNE's son
> While HE, when strength and youth are flown,
> Shall die UNKNOWN [Robinson 1799 p. 104].

As in «The Deserted Cottage», Robinson does not assign a specific identity to the poem's protagonist nor to the war in which he was called to serve. There is no explicit reference to nationality: while the context of the novel allows the old soldier to be identified as British, the elegy itself carries far-reaching implications. The author's aversion to war and her affinity with those who suffered its worst consequences permeate her literary production, imbuing it with undisputable political connotations.

A further reflection on, and condemnation of, war and its tragic effects on young soldiers and their families is conveyed later in the novel by Mrs. Sedgley[14] and her recount of Lisette and Henri's poignant story. While staying at the *Hotel de la Revolution* in Paris at the onset of the French Revolutionary Wars, Mrs. Sedgley meets Lisette, a French girl who urgently warns her to leave as soon as possible. Lisette then introduces her to her fiancé, Henri, a French soldier she plans to marry the following day before they depart together for the Flanders, where he is sent to fight. Unfortunately, Mrs. Sedgley fails to escape in time and is imprisoned, probably due to her status as a foreigner on French soil. Both the imprisonment and the hint to the Flanders situate the event around 1792, drawing from Robinson's autobiography – when she travelled to Spa in Belgium to seek treatment for her paralysis but had to return to England due to the conflict in the Flanders. After spending several months in prison, Mrs. Sedgley is freed and runs again into Lisette, who is mourning the death of her Henri, «fallen in battle» [Robinson 2003, p. 170]. The young girl,

[14] Mrs. Sedgley is a fictitious name adopted by Susan Sherville (sister of Lord Francis) when, pregnant out of wedlock, had to invent a new identity for herself – that of a war widow – and for her natural daughter, Frances. Martha first meets Mrs. Sedgley in mysterious circumstances and helps her and the toddler without knowing their story until the young woman, later in the novel, explains in detail what happened to her. Mrs. Sedgley's story is told in a long flashback.

devastated by the event, lives now in a small cottage not far from Calais together with her mother-in-law, unwilling to leave Henri, who is buried nearby on a hill. Unlike in «The Old Soldier», this passage contains no references to the glory of war or the fame that derives from dying on the battlefield. What remains after the death of a young soldier is the affection and eternal grief of his loved ones. Similarly to the soldier's sister in «The Deserted Cottage», the soldier's young wife dies a few days after her beloved husband. Although Robinson does not explicitly state it, she implies Lisette's possible suicide by noting that her mother-in-law mourns her before «a cross which stood by the road side» [Robinson 2003, p. 171], a burial practice often associated with self-murder. Lisette's heartbreaking story epitomises war's disabling powers at their extreme. War took away everything she had: not only her husband but also her future and her health. Robinson portrays Lisette as gravely ill, her grief visibly debilitating her body and vital functions – «her lips were feverish, her face was as pale as death» [Robinson 2003, p. 171]. From this perspective, her suicide could be read as her last rebellious act of agency against a socio-political context that indirectly harmed her and her physical integrity. Robinson harshly condemns the political circumstances that led to the war and its tragedies through Mrs. Sedgley's reflections: «I sighed for poor Lisette; I lamented the fate of her dear Henry; and I shuddered at the horrors which usurpation diffused under the mask of freedom» [Robinson 2003, p. 171]. Although not explicitly mentioned, the critique of the French revolutionary government and its deceitful actions is unmistakable.

Among the social inequalities exacerbated by armed conflicts, gender emerges as a particularly relevant issue in Robinson's narration, which becomes more explicit in its political engagement when portraying the situation in Revolutionary France. Robinson depicts Paris during the First Republic as a city dominated by men, where women are reduced to mere sensual objects and are subjected to systemic sexual oppression. Mrs. Sedgley reflects on Paris in a flashback, recalling her travels through Europe as a companion to a family friend around 1972. The situation is portrayed as critical – «the tumults attending the continental war, alarmed my travelling protectress» [Robinson 2003, p. 162] – but what awaits them in Paris is far worse than they expected.

> On our arrival at Paris, we found every thing wild and licentious. Order and subordination were trampled beneath the footsteps of anarchy: the streets were filled with terrifying *spectacles*; and the people seemed nearly frantic with the plenitude of dominion; while the excess of horror war strongly and strikingly contrasted by the vaunted display of boundless sensuality. I passed a few days in Paris, two years before, in my *route* to Italy: the change was awful and impressive. I sighed when I recollected the cause of the metamorphosis, and I shuddered while I contemplated the effects [Robinson 1799, p. 163].

The final line is exceptionally powerful, especially considering Robinson's position at the onset of the French Revolution. Symmetrically constructed in order to increase the contrast between the two arguments, the sentence subtly resumes the author's stance and criticism of the French state of affairs. The «cause of the metamorphosis» is probably the Revolution itself, thus the «sigh» symbolises the author's regret for its failure. Indeed, Robinson and many English intellectuals initially supported the overthrow of the *ancien régime* as a step toward an egalitarian and advanced society.[15] Conversely, the «shudder» reflects her dismay at the Revolution's descent into violence and tyranny, transforming a rebellion against a despotic monarchy into an even more oppressive regime. In this case, it is Mrs. Sedgley who embodies the author and conveys her thoughts, while also partially retracing her journey through France before the beginning of the wars.

The figure of Lisette, who epitomises the trope of the war widow, somehow introduces the theme of women's experiences in wartime, highlighting the type of treatment they suffer and the dangerous situations they are subjected to based solely on their gender. After warning Mrs. Sedgley of the dangers in Paris, the two briefly meet again in the garden of the *Palais Royale*, where «women were dressed like Bacchanalians; and the men like the frantic fiends of Pandemonium» [Robinson 1799, p. 164]. Mrs. Sedgley hardly recognizes Lisette because she is dressed like the other French women: her arms naked, her bosom uncovered and her left leg showing up to the knee. Lisette explains she had no choice but to conform, saying she was «so obliged to follow the example of others» as her «own safety tell [her] to make the sacrifice» [Robinson 1799, p. 164]. Her words imply that women in Revolutionary France were forced to appear as sexually objectified bodies, and any nonconformity was violently punished. Mrs. Sedgley herself is also a victim of male dominion in war-related circumstances. During her journey to Paris with her protectress, the two women are warned not to depart after sunset «for all soldiers are men of gallantry, and pretty women are fair plunder in times of hostility» [Robinson 1799, p. 162]. Subsequently, when imprisoned in Paris, she is deceived by the English gentleman travelling with her, who promises marriage in exchange for her liberty. The ceremony, officiated by a false priest (who was actually Marat's *valet de chambre*) is a ruse. The man abandons her after consummating the marriage, leaving her in prison, alone and pregnant. A few months

[15] For a matter of length it was not possible to deepen the strict relationship between Robinson and the French Revolution, but it is worth briefly mentioning that if the author strongly supported the positive changes the Revolution was supposed to lead to at the beginning, she also harshly criticised how Revolutionary leaders subsequently handled their tyrannical government and how they treated their people. Her different positions towards the situation in France are exemplified in particular by her poems *Ainsi Va Le Monde* (1790) and *Marie Antoinette's Lamentation in her Prison of the Temple* (1793).

later, Marat himself attempts to blackmail her, granting her freedom but «on terms that made [her] shudder» [Robinson 1799, p. 166], certainly hinting at sexual favours in exchange for her life. Upon her refusal, he adds her name to the list of people to be executed. Mrs. Sedgley narrowly escapes execution when Marat is assassinated the following day, enabling her eventual escape from prison and France.

Women's bodies, similarly to those of the poor and disabled soldiers, are reduced to mere commodities in wartime, items to be exploited and discarded when no longer useful. Robinson's narration rightfully presents a different battlefield for women to fight on: a patriarchal society where their physical integrity is constantly at stake, disabled as they are by male supremacy whose authoritative powers during warfare are greater and crueller. Nonetheless, in this last novel, Robinson introduces a thought-provoking counter-narrative in which the voices of marginalized people are heard and respected. Their struggles are ultimately overcome, and their lives are worthy of a safer future. Women, even those regarded as «fallen» for having improper professions or children out of wedlock, are «not silenced, not exiled», they do not turn to prostitution, nor do they «die repenting» [Rooney 2006, p. 368]. On the contrary, they fulfil their desires and live a contented life. Disabled soldiers, too, are not depicted as evil profiteers but rather as valorous men who sacrificed their lives and bodies to defend their countries, and are thus deserving of assistance and charity. Even suicidal acts are met with deep understanding and compassion, rather than judgment. Martha herself condenses the author's standpoint by saying that she «cannot enter into the modern system of tormenting [her] own sex» [Robinson 2003, p. 256] and this progressive attitude extends to all outcasts in Robinson's novel. The author's harsh criticism is directed at those who have full responsibility for wars, inequalities and discrimination: societies and governments, with their political machinations.

Bibliography

Bainbridge, S. (2003): *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Visions and Conflict*, New York, Oxford University Press.

Bennett, B. T. (1976): *British War Poetry in the Age of Romanticism 1793-1815*, New York and London, Garland.

Bradshaw, M., ed. (2016): *Disabling Romanticism, Body, Mind and Text*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.

— (2019): «"Its Own Concentred Recompense": The Impact of Critical Disability Studies on Romanticism» in *Humanities* 8 (2), 103.

Brewer, W. D. (2016): «Mary Robinson's Paralysis and the Discourse of Disability» in M. Bradshaw ed., *Disabling Romanticism, Body, Mind and Text*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 105-126.

Drabble, M., ed. (1985): *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, Fifth Edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Emsley, C. (1979): *British Society and the French Wars, 1793-1815*, Basingstoke and London, Macmillan.
Farese, C. (2022): «"Sickness is a Dangerous Indulgence": Disease and Disability in Jane Austen's *Persuasion* and *Sanditon*» in *Textus*: *Romantic Studies in Italy*, n. 3, September-December 2022, pp. 37-55.
Hay, D. (1982): «War, Dearth and Theft in Eighteenth Century: The Records of the English Courts» in *Past & Present*, n. 95, May 1982, pp. 117-160.
Jordan, G., Rogers, N. (1989): «Admirals as Heroes: Patriotism and Liberty in Hanoverian England» in *Journal of British Studies*, n. 3, vol. 28, July 1989, pp. 201-224.
Joshua, E. (2020): *Physical Disability in British Romantic Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Mitchell, D. T., Snyder, S. L. (2006): «Representations of Disability, History of» in G. L. Albrecht ed., *Encyclopedia of Disability*, 5 vols, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage, vol. 3, pp. 1382–1394.
Pramaggiore, V. (2019): «A Woman of Enlightened Understanding": Politics and Feminism in Mary Darby Robinson's Literary Production» in L. Crisafulli, M., Golinelli, G., eds, *Women's Voices and Genealogies in Literary Studies in English*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 108-123.
Robinson, M. D. (1799): *The Natural Daughter*. *With Portraits of the Leadenhead Family*. *A Novel,* in S. M. Setzer ed. (2003): *A Letter to the Women of England* and *The Natural Daughter*, Peterborough, Broadview Literary Press, pp. 89-296.
— (1800): «The Deserted Cottage» in Crisafulli, L. M., ed. (2003): *Antologia delle Poetesse Romantiche Inglesi,* Vol.1, Roma, Carocci, pp. 346-347.
— (1894): *Memoirs of Mary Robinson* «*Perdita*», Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott Company.
Rooney, M. (2006): «"Belonging to No/body": Mary Robinson, *The Natural Daughter* and Rewriting Feminine Identity» in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, n. 3, vol. 18, Spring 2006, University of Toronto Press, pp. 355-372.
Setzer, S. M. (1997): «Romancing the Reign of Terror: Sexual Politics in Mary Robinson's *Natural Daughter*» in *Criticism*, n. 4, vol. 39, Fall 1997, Wayne State University Press, pp. 531-555.
— (2009): «Original Letters of the Celebrated Mrs. Mary Robinson» in *Philological Quarterly*, n. 3, vol. 88, Summer 2009, University of Iowa, pp. 305-335.
Ty, E. (1998): *Empowering the Feminine: The Narratives of Mary Robinson, Jane West and Amelia Opie 1796-1812,* Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
Turner, D. M. (2012): *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England: Imagining Physical Impairment*, New York, London, Routledge.

Labouring-Class Writing in Liverpool, 1790s-1810s: Communal Networks and Revolutionary Undercurrents

Abstract

The city of Liverpool in the 1790s and early 1800s was experimenting in the making of an advanced debate, in which the activity of individual networking in a range of diverse communal contexts proved to be strategic to constructing a political space for self-expression. This paper aims to chart some of the fragmented traces of this public debate, which included a variegated milieu of writers and intellectuals from the working classes. Liverpool labouring class blind poet – and sailor, innkeeper, journalist, bookseller – Edward Rushton (1756-1814) is in many ways the embodiment of this particular form of late eighteenth-century sociability, and for this reason makes an especially effective case study.

Franca Dellarosa

> […] who shall say, even of the unfortunate children of genius, what gleams of delight may have illumined the gloom of their obscurity; how many a tranquil hour's enjoyment, after labour, has been secured in the perusal of some favorite author, all the treasure of whose mind, when once published to the world, may in this age be imparted to the poor with almost the same facility as the rich? Nor does it follow […] that a love of reading, or a fondness for the study of any particular science, should necessarily interfere with habits of industry [Anon 1833, pp. 11-12].

The Labouring Class Intellectual and the «communitarian idiom»

The passage in epigraph is excerpted from the introduction to an early 1830s anthology of poems, interestingly dedicated to outlining *Sketches of Obscure Poets, With Specimens of Their Writings*. Various elements deserve comment in the passage, which illustrates a recurring inclination in the incipient tradition of Victorian biography. As Juliette Atkinson has argued

in her study of the genre, the concern with «hidden lives, the lives of failures, and the lives of humble men and women» – remarkably, *poets'* lives, as is the case here – this concern was as much part of biographical writing as it is of Victorian poetry, journalism and the novel [Atkinson 2010, p. 3].

The tropes related to the image of the natural genius, the humbleness of social station, the light of (self)-education – but also, the looming anxiety lest the «love of reading» might «interfere» in some way «with habits of industry» – all the rhetorical equipment of the «uneducated poet», which is evidently at work in the passage, had been initiated by Robert Southey's essay, published two years earlier as a supplement to the *Attempts in Verse by John Jones, an Old Servant*, under the title *Lives and Works of our Uneducated Poets*. In it, the Poet Laureate suggested, «[the] exercise of the mind, instead of rendering the individual discontented with his station, had conduced greatly to his happiness and if it had not made him a good man, had contributed to keep him so» [Southey 1831, 1836, pp. 11-12]. The two passages evidently share a trait of class anxiety, which is even more perspicuous in Southey's, and has apparently to do with the seditious potentiality that the intellectual exercise on the part of the working class member – whether in the form of reading or writing – may intimate, including a dangerous tendency to neglect the abiding obligations related to one's immutable «station» in society – or, even worse, the possible questioning of its foundations, as implied in the disquieting though remote prospect of the individual's *discontent* that «the exercise of the mind» may kindle. That this was a chief concern even in the general terms of current educational policy is made unquestionably clear in the shared language and mind frame as appear in an 1806 tract considering the advantages of a school for the poor:

> Let it not be conceived for a moment, that it is the object of the author to recommend a system of education for the poor that shall pass the bounds of their condition in society […]. To exceed that point would be utopian, impolitic, and dangerous, since it would confound the ranks of society upon which the general happiness of the lower orders, no less than those that are more elevated, depends […]; since by indiscriminate education […] those destined for laborious occupations would become *discontented* and unhappy in an inferior situation of life, generating insubordination and disloyalty [Colquhoun 1806, p. 148, my emphasis; see also Altick 1998, p. 143].

The cultural fantasy of the labouring-class writer as «the embodiment of natural genius», which especially saturates the passage from the anonymous anthology cited above, has been discussed over the last few decades, within current dynamic and historically nuanced research practice, which is part of the present-day, continuing process of re-historicizing Romantic-era litera-

ture. This critical move is significantly mirrored in the reshaping of the very pedagogy of Romanticism, where the «changing canon», to use the tag proposed by David Higgins and Sharon Ruston in their 2010 book on *Teaching Romanticism*, has labouring class poetry as a pivotal example. This approach is especially sensitive to the dynamics of power and resistance as central to many historical testimonies no less than present acts of critical reading, and the identification of communitarian literary, cultural and political networks has become crucial to constructing the profile of the labouring-class intellectual. Aruna Krishnamurthy proposes a «tripartite rendering» in the formation history of working-class identity in relation to presence and role of «the figure of the intellectual»:

> [T]he early eighteenth-century moment that saw the rise of a sporadic but comprehensible "tradition" of working-class poets who wrote for a select readership and within conventional modes and genres; the 1790s era of the radicalized artisan who innovatively adapted the universalistic language of the bourgeois public sphere to the demands of an indigent and restless constituency of readers; and the Chartist era of the 1830s, where the working-class intellectual consolidated the identity of the working classes within a multi-generic, counter hegemonic narrative […] [Krishnamurthy 2009, p. 4].

Against this background, Liverpool in the 1790s and early 1800s was experimenting in the making of an advanced debate, in which the activity of individual networking in a range of diverse communal contexts proved to be strategic to constructing a political space for self-expression in a hostile political and socio-economic environment, by resorting to what Krishnamurthy, again, identifies as the «communitarian idiom […] based on universal rights and liberties that defined the 1790s» [Krishnamurthy 2009, p. 7]. This paper aims to chart some of the fragmented traces of this public debate, which included a variegated milieu of writers and intellectuals from the working classes. Liverpool labouring class blind poet – and sailor, innkeeper, journalist, bookseller – Edward Rushton (1756-1814) is in many ways the embodiment of this particular form of late eighteenth-century sociability, and for this reason makes an especially effective case study. The extant testimonies of his eventful life, that is, his son's obituary published in *The Belfast Monthly Magazine* and the extended memoir by his friend and editor of his posthumous *Poems and Other Writings* (1824), William Shepherd, reveal the facts of an existence and the traits of a personality that proved to be impressively aiming towards self-empowerment. This process was arguably related to the traumatic ending of his career as sailor in the merchant navy, which he had entered as a cabin boy at the age of ten. In 1775, as a young mate engaged in what appears to have been

his first and only slaving voyage, he contracted trachoma, apparently in the attempt to bring aid to the enslaved people below deck, where the disease had been spreading [Cf. Dellarosa, forthcoming 2025]. Once back to Liverpool, in a situation of personal and economic distress, he would pay a boy «three pence per week» to read literature and history books for him, «an hour or two every evening»; and he would spend «numerous solitary hours in meditating on what had been read to him, and in speculations in which a philosophic mind is fond of indulging» [Shepherd 1824, pp. 15-16] – as if to contemplate his own upbringing as a «self-taught» [Maidment 1987] reader – *and* writer – entering a territory which he is not expected to tread.[1] This exercise of vicarious reading proved to be an emancipating practice for Rushton, to the extent that it nurtured his inclination to intellectual unconventionality and self-awareness.

My aim is to chart some of the networks that connect Edward Rushton with the milieu of provincial radical politics in Britain and, prospectively, in Ireland. However fragmented, documentary sources consistently record Rushton's associates as including intellectuals, politicians, journalists and printers, such as John M'Creery and John Thelwall in Liverpool, William Cowdroy and Thomas Walker in Manchester. Rushton's many-sided commitment, especially with the periodical press, is yet another aspect of the writer's multifaceted engagement in the public space of the Romantic era, which is testified also by his direct involvement, between 1788 and 1790, as part owner and co-editor, in the management of a radical-oriented weekly paper, *The Liverpool Herald*.[2]

The mapping of these factual itineraries will be interspersed with references to some imaginative and rather incisive notes of *discontent*, appearing at very different times and venues in Rushton's writing corpus, which not only consistently advocate the right of the labouring-class individual to intellectual

[1] That this is a central concern in the writer's intellectual commitment is proven by the opening of his unpublished essay on the «Dissimilarity of Colour in the Human Species», first printed in Rushton 1824, pp. 183-212, now in Rushton 2014, pp. 205-215; see Dellarosa 2017, pp. 120-122. The topic is also central to Rushton's poem «A Caution to my Friend J.M.», dedicated to John M'Creery, and to the elegy in memory of his other friend William Cowdroy, publisher of the *Manchester Gazette* [Rushton 2014, pp. 138, 164-165], for which, see below.

[2] His commitment with the periodical was short-lived, however. As his biographer William Shepherd reports, Rushton openly censured the cruelty of the naval impressment practice in town on the paper, and for this reason became the target of intimidations by the Lieutenant on service. As he refused to retract, a disagreement with his partner and friend Hugh Mulligan followed, which led him to resign from the post [cf. Shepherd 1824, pp. 16-17; M'Creery 1828, pp. 64-65; Dellarosa 2014, pp. 8-11].

independence – but also carry a consciously elaborated element of class-related (self)-empowerment.

The Liverpool Network

In the conclusion to his long-winded, laborious long poem *The Press*, published in two parts between 1803 and 1828, and intended to celebrate at once the epic glories of this extraordinary technology and its founding fathers, as well as the inestimable political value of free press, radical printer John M'Creery (also spelt McCreery, 1768-1832) conjures up the spirit of «Friendship» as a «healing balm» apt to «soothe [his] feelings», which have been vexed because of the «direful ills» brought about by «Power's sleepless hosts». These are the transnational enemies of free press, that is, William Pitt, whose «statue» made of «chains and war-trophies» rests on the «base» of «subjugated Press», and the unnamed «dread traitor to the sacred cause» of «equal rights and equal laws», Napoleon Bonaparte [M'Creery 1828, pp. 24-27].

Among the «rare community» of his Liverpool friends, M'Creery includes Irish poet Hugh Mulligan; obviously and primarily William «Lorenzo» Roscoe – to whom the poem is inscribed; James Currie, for whom he had printed his edition of the *Works of Robert Burns*; historian and poet William Smyth; William Rathbone IV, a banker, philanthropist and committed abolitionist and a central figure in Liverpool public life; and Edward Rushton, whom he addresses directly:

> […] —thou—whose independent soul,
> Nor ills of life—nor adverse fate controls,
> Though solemn darkness shrouds thine orbs of sight,
> Strong are thy beams of intellectual light [M'Creery 1828, p. 27].

In the second part of the poem, twenty-five years later, he was to lament the loss of many of these friends, including Rushton, and commemorated him in a footnote, again, as «an example of inflexible independence rarely to be met with» [Rushton, p. 166]. The list of names mentioned in *The Press* loosely brings together the group of progressive intellectuals that would come to be known as the 'Roscoe circle'. M'Creery was professionally related to most of them – in particular he started a long and fruitful collaboration with William Roscoe with the long process of printing his *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, Called The Magnificent* (1796) in a fine edition enriched with engravings. Roscoe's intense bibliophilic interest was in the service of a wide-ranging cultural and political project, intending to promote literature and the arts in Liverpool as a sort of new Florence on the banks of the Mersey, which would establish his reputation as the city's intellectual beacon in the nineteenth century [Wilson 2008; Fletcher 2016].

Rushton and M'Creery collaborated on various projects, including the elegant broadside edition of Rushton's anti-press-gang poem *Will Clewline*, in 1801, which features a powerfully melodramatic engraving of the brutal scene of state violence as dramatized in the ballad. M'Creery was also the printer of Rushton's only volume of *Poems* published in his lifetime, in 1806. By that time, he had moved to London, where in 1805 he set up a printing office, located in «Black-Horse Court and particularly arranged for the execution of fine printing», as he himself informed the public [quoted in Barker 1961, p. 92]. A copy of the volume, preserved in the Sydney Jones University Library in Liverpool, has a handwritten dedication to William Rathbone on the frontispiece, which brings together the names of author, printer, and dedicatee, offering an effective visualization of a fragment of the Liverpool network [see Dellarosa 2014, pp. 44-45]. In that same collection, the poem «A Caution to My Friend J. M.» reads as follows:

> Now 'tis thus with the form in which genius is shrin'd,
> Ever plain is the mantle, the hues ever deep,
> Nay fate has oft shrouded this essence of mind,
> In the pauper's grim cloak, and the hide of a sweep;
> Then of splendor, thou son of the muse, Oh beware!
> For the true mark of talent, is dingy and bare.

Addressed to his friend «J. M.» – John M'Creery, that is – as an appropriate warning to the author of *The Press* against affectation and pretentiousness in writing – the poem encapsulates Rushton's poetics and politics. The vindication of ordinary language for poetry – the «plain mantle», or «grim cloak», of the «pauper» – had of course wide currency in the body of poetry published in the contemporary periodical press, not to speak of its significance in the laboratory experiment of *Lyrical Ballads*. At the same time, the image, when read literally, carries a formidable claim for the intellectual potentialities of those living in the margins – the pauper, the chimneysweep – those whose «essence of mind» – whose intellectual faculties, that is, are damaged by poverty and chore. Rushton's preliminary and deliberate political choice is to bring the margin to the centre, which has crucial consequences on both content and form of his poetry – from the anti-pastoral of *West Indian Eclogues*, with the enslaved Africans being the only speaking voices, to the revolutionary ballad dedicated to Toussaint Louverture, where the leader of the Haitian Revolution addresses his troops from a first-person incendiary stance.[3]

[3] For an extensive treatment of Rushton's extremely consistent interplay of poetics and politics, see Dellarosa 2014.

> Liverpool Jan.y 30 1806
>
> My dear Sir,
> About a Week ago J. Thelwall left Liverpool in order to Lecture in London where should he meet with encouragement he intends to remove his Family and cast his Sheet Anchor for Life.
> To serve a Character who has been much persecuted, and who is indefatigable in his efforts to maintain a Wife and six little ones, would give me great pleasure, but Justice compels me to say, that I have never heard of any Individual whose Impediments of utterance have ever been improved, or even ameliorated by his mode of treatment, in saying this however it must not be understood that J. T. has never been successful in any of his cases, I can only say, that if [he] has been successful they have not come to my knowledge.

This excerpt from Edward Rushton's only extant MS letter, addressed to Manchester radical Thomas Walker, stands out as first-hand evidence of Rushton's relational network in the radical milieu of the North-West [Cf. Rushton 1806, 2014, pp. 220-221]. The letter appears to be a reply to Walker's request of an opinion regarding John Thelwall's ability as a tutor in the «Science of Elocution and the cure of Impediments», on behalf of a friend of his. The passage uncovers some characteristic qualities of Rushton's person, including a typically straightforward integrity, and a trait of instinctive sympathy and loyalty towards those who suffered for their ideas, and an element of gentleness too, that can be especially appreciated in his salutation: «Remember me to Cowdroy and believe me dear Sir, Yours Affectionately, Edw Rushton».

John Thelwall had spent autumn 1805 in Liverpool, where he moved his family, and had opened an Institute there. As highlighted by E. P. Thompson, «Thelwall was a significant link-figure between circles of advanced reformers and intellectuals in London and the provinces […]. He clearly knew many of the "Roscoe circle" in Liverpool» [Thompson 1997, p. 176]. This emerges in his correspondence with his Liverpool patron Dr Peter Crompton, where «he asked to be remembered to "Raithbone" (another of his patrons), Shepherd» – that is, Reverend William Shepherd, another important member of the group and Rushton's biographer – «Smith, Rushton, and to Roscoe himself» [Thompson 1997, p. 176].

The close friendship the two writers shared permeates the Ode John Thelwall dedicated *To Edward Rushton, of Liverpool, on his Restoration to Sight.* The poem first appeared in *The Monthly Magazine* in August 1807, that is, following the success of the eye surgery performed on Rushton by Manchester

oculist, Benjamin Gibson. The poem was also included in the collection *The Vestibule of Eloquence*, printed by John M'Creery, and was offered to the reader among the reading «exercises for the pupils of the institution» [Thelwall 1810, p. 73]. In the *Ode*, the desire to share the emotion for the extraordinary event permeates the poetic I's expression of elation, as well as his awareness of his friend's poetic imagination, which elsewhere in the poem he describes as «poetic fire»:

> Oh friend !—that I the tear might see
> That streams, in silent ecstacy,
> O'er every form belov'd!
> Might hear the murmurs of that tongue,
> When first it pours the grateful song,
> By cordial rapture mov'd! [Thelwall 1810, p. 83]

Going back to the letter, the other key actors involved in in the exchange, i.e., the addressee, Thomas Walker (1749-1817), and the mutual friend, William Cowdroy (1752-1814), summon up the milieu of Manchester radical print culture.[4] A well-to-do merchant and a prominent public figure in Manchester, Thomas Walker successfully lobbied on behalf of the Manchester cotton industry in applying to the House of Commons and the Government for the repeal of Pitt's fustian tax in 1785. He was President of the Manchester Constitutional Society and espoused all radical causes, including the abolition of the slave trade. He became the editor of the *Manchester Herald*, a newspaper that only ran between 30 March 1792 and 23 March 1793 and was closed down following a brutal act of intimidation on the part of a «King and Church» mob in December 1792 [Baylen and Gossman 1979, p. 508]. He was tried for sedition, and acquitted in April, 1794 [Knight 1957]. The *Manchester Herald* hosted Rushton's poems on more than one occasion, at a time in which the few pieces he published appeared mostly anonymous. This is the case with *The Fire of Liberty* and *Human Debasement: A Fragment*, both toughly political, which would be explicitly ascribed to Rushton as they appeared in his 1824 posthumous edition.[5]

[4] Research work in this specific aspect is particularly laborious, as most of the relevant material, including the local newspapers, is only available in microfilm.

[5] *The Fire of Liberty*, however, was printed with the inscription «By E. Rushton» in the American paper *The Time-Piece and Literary Companion* for 27 December, 1797. *The Time-Piece* often hosted Rushton's pieces, most notably including the very first American edition of his *Expostulatory Letter to George Washington*. This was printed on 26 May, 1797, that is, about three months after the Liverpool edition, which presents an opening note, dated 20 February. Cf. Baines's editorial note in Rushton 2014, p. 255. On Rushton and *The Time-Piece*, see Dellarosa 2014, pp. 198-200.

With Cowdroy and his *Manchester Gazette*, which was the *Herald*'s successor, it is a somewhat different case. Consultation of the periodical has revealed the inclusion in the paper of the ascribed poems in memory of Robert Burns (which are presented as newly published), and the advertisement of the *Expostulatory Letter to George Washington.* A rare letter addressed by Edward Rushton to his friend, actor Samuel William Ryley on the occasion of Cowdroy's death, in the summer of 1814, which was printed in a memorial volume by one of his grandsons, bears evidence of a close and long-standing friendship – in the poet's words, «an intimacy of nearly thirty years» [Rushton 2014, p. 216]. Cowdroy had been a radical publisher and a playwright, with a career in the North West area, moving between Chester and Salford and finally Manchester. The «humour» and «art of fascinating a company», conjured up in his friend's eulogy, account for a fairly substantial career in the theatre, with the publication and production on the provincial stage of a number of mainly comic plays, including the farce *The Vaporish Man, or, Hypocrisy Detected* (1782), and the «Serious, Comic and Satyric» piece *Dissertation upon Faces*, performed in Liverpool in 1784 [Baucom 2005, pp. 72-75 (73)]. It is thus significant and appropriate that Rushton's typically defiant attitude towards the propertied classes would take on an unexpected and not humourless turn – of all poems, in the elegy composed on the passing of his long-time friend and fellow radical intellectual, William Cowdroy, which took place on August 2, 1814, only a few months before his own, on 22 November of the same year:

> I know there are those who disdain
> The verse that extols the obscure,
> But if fortunes were measured by brain,
> What numbers of those would be poor!
>
> The treasures poor Cowdroy possess'd
> Were funds of wit, humour, and whim,
> And thousands with plums may be blest
> For one that is favoured like him.
> [Rushton 2014, p. 164]

These late lines of Rushton's, composed at his friend's death and so very close to his own, bear a final testimony to the writer's undeviating defiance of all forms of discrimination, especially as based on privilege, which denies recognition to intellectual power when associated with poverty and «obscurity». The only seemingly incongruous jesting posture that surfaces in these lines – as epitomized by the poet's use of a slang word like *plums* for big money[6] –

[6] See the entry in *Green's Dictionary of Slang*, https://greensdictofslang.com/entry/qalw4vi [last accessed 15.11.2024].

by paying homage to the «treasures» of «wit, humour, and whim» attending his friend Cowdroy, stands out as the evidence of Edward Rushton's enduring claim for (self)-empowerment, against the odds of class and wealth. They also bear testimony to the significance of the communal networks in the provinces, at the momentous turn of the nineteenth-century, in providing an alternative narrative for some of the key dynamics defining contemporary British politics and society.

Bibliography

Altick, R. D. (1998): *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (1957), 2nd Edition, Columbus, Ohio State University Press.

Anon (1833): *Sketches of Obscure Poets, With Specimens of Their Writings*, London, Cochrane & McCrow.

Atkinson, J. (2010): *Victorian Biography Reconsidered*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press.

Barker, J. (1961): «John McCreery, a Radical Printer, 1768-1832», in *The Library*, 5th ser., vol. 16, n. 2, June, pp. 81-103.

Baucom, I. (2005): *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History*, Durham and London, Duke University Press.

Baylen, J. O., Gossman, N. J. eds (1979): *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals*, Vol.1, 1770-1830, Hassocks, Harvester Press.

Colquhoun, P. (1806): *A Treatise on Indigence; Exhibiting a General View of the National Resources for Productive Labour, with Propositions for Ameliorating the Conditions of the Poor*, London, Printed for J. Hatchard.

Davis, M. T. (2009): «Walker, Thomas (1749-1817)», *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/63603 [last accessed 15/12/2024].

Dellarosa, F. (2014): *Talking Revolution: Edward Rushton's Rebellious Poetics, 1782-1814*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press.

— (2017): «"Behold in these Coromantees | The fate of an agonized world": Edward Rushton's Transnational Radicalism», in J. Goodridge and B. Keegan, eds, *A History of British Working-Class Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 116-129.

— (2025): «Foresuffering the *Zong*: Edward Rushton, Blindness to Empowerment», in E. Joshua, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Disability and Literatures in English, 1700-1900*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

Fletcher, S. ed. (2016): *Roscoe and Italy: The Reception of Italian Renaissance History and Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (2012), Abingdon – New York, Routledge.

Green's Dictionary of Slang. Online. https://greensdictofslang.com/ [last accessed 15/12/2024].

Higgins, D., Ruston, S. eds (2010): *Teaching Romanticism*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Horner, C. (2008): «Cowdroy, William (1752-1814)», *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/63761 [last accessed 15/12/2024].
Knight, F. (1957): *The Strange Case of Thomas Walker: Ten Years in the Life of a Manchester Radical*, London, Lawrence & Wishart.
Krishnamurthy, A., ed. (2009): *The Working-class Intellectual in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Britain*, Farnham, Ashgate.
Maidment, B. (1987): *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain*, Manchester, Carcanet.
M'Creery, J. (1828): *The Press: A Poem in Two Parts, with Other Pieces*, 2nd Edition, London, William Pickering.
Rushton, E. (1806): «Letter to Thomas Walker», 30 January, in *Letters Addressed to Thomas Walker (1749-1817)*. BL Add. MS 88955: 1755-1819, fols. 351-352; now in Rushton 2014, pp. 220-21.
— (1824): *Poems and Other Writings by the Late Edward Rushton, to Which is Added, a Sketch of the Life of the Author, by the Rev. William Shepherd*, London, Effingham Wilson, Royal Exchange.
— (2014): *The Collected Writings of Edward Rushton*, ed. P. Baines, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press.
Rushton [Jr.], E. (1814): «Biographical Sketch», *Belfast Monthly Magazine*, 31 December, pp. 474-85.
Shepherd, W. (1824): «Life of Edward Rushton», in *Poems and Other Writings by the Late Edward Rushton*, London, Effingham Wilson, Royal Exchange, pp. 9-28.
Southey, R. (1831): *Attempts in Verse, by John Jones, an Old Servant: With Some Account of the Writer, Written by Himself: And an Introductory Essay on the Lives and Works of Our Uneducated Poets, by Robert Southey, Esq. Poet Laureate*, London, John Murray.
— (1836): *Lives of Uneducated Poets, to Which Are Added Attempts in Verse, by John Jones, An Old Servant. By Robert Southey, Esq. Poet Laureate*, London, H. G. Bohn.
Thelwall, J. (1810): «Ode To Edward Rushton, of Liverpool, on his Restoration to Sight, after a Blindness of upwards of Thirty Years, by a Series of Operations performed by Mr. Gibson, of Manchester» (1807), *The Vestibule of Eloquence: Original Articles, Oratorical and Poetical*, London, Printed for the Author, by J. M'Creery, Black Horse Court, pp. 81-84.
Thompson, E. P. (1997): *The Romantics: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Thelwall*, Rendlesham Woodbridge, The Merlin Press.
Wilson A. (2008): *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press..

Poet's corner

When man's great curse, despotic sway,
Sweeps myriads from the realms of day;
When wide o'er all the Christian world
Destruction's banner's are unfurl'd;
When Europe with exhaustion reels,

Yet nor remorse nor pity feels;
At this dread period SOUTHEY stands,
The wild harp trembling in his hands; —
And whilst fanatic furor fires his mind,
"*Glory to God*," he cries, "*deliverance for mankind!*"

[...]

I grieve when earth is drench'd with gore,
And realms with woe are covered o'er;
I grieve, and reprobate the plan
Of thanking God for slaughter'd man:
Nor can I hope that lawless sway,
Fierce as a tiger o'er his prey,
Will ever uncompelled resign
That power the priest proclaims divine:
No, Southey, no! oppressors ne'er unbind;
'Tis man—high-minded man must liberate mankind.

Edward Rushton, LINES ADDRESSED TO ROBT. SOUTHEY, ESQ. POET LAUREAT ON THE PUBLICATION OF HIS "CARMEN TRIUMPHALE" (1817)

Loredana Magazzeni

Loredana Magazzeni vive a Bologna, si occupa di poesia, critica letteraria e storia dell'educazione delle donne. È Dottore di ricerca in Scienze pedagogiche, e ha pubblicato saggi fra cui *Operaie della penna. Donne, docenti e libri scolastici fra Ottocento e Novecento* (Aracne, 2019). Fa parte del Collettivo di traduzione WIT (Women in Translation), con cui ha pubblicato l'antologia Audre Lorde, *D'amore e di lotta. Poesie scelte* (Le Lettere, 2018). Con Seri Editore è uscito il libro di poesie *Nella tempesta presente* (2024). È socia dell'Associazione Orlando di Bologna, della SIL (Società Italiana delle Letterate) e del CIRSE (Centro Italiano per la Ricerca Storico Educativa).

Quello che la poesia non può

Non può scrivere la bomba, il sibilo, lo spostamento d'aria
la spaventosa ondata di calore in caduta verticale
la pelle a brandelli le orecchie che esplodono
il silenzio la nube nera
l'incredulità dei corpi a pezzi
i calcinacci le rovine il cratere
la polvere che ricade i muri sbriciolati
i corpi a pezzi
il piede in una scatola salvato dal cognato
le famiglie smembrate la vita
volatilizzata senza neppure un'alba a venire
e un altro giorno ancora la fisica della distruzione
il boato lo spostamento d'aria
il calore la pelle cade a pezzi
gli organi smembrati le orecchie esplose
il silenzio la nube nera
e ancora e ancora sempre perché è meglio
seguire l'economia della morte
meglio
che cibo ed acqua per i bambini ridere, farli tornare a giocare
perché sono bambini speranza del pianeta
domani

Leila Falà Magnini

Leila Falà Magnini è attrice e poeta, vive a Bologna dove ha lavorato all'Università, a Lettere e nel sistema Museale d'Ateneo. Si è formata nell'humus culturale e politico di fine anni 70 a Bologna, studiando al Dams. È tra le fondatrici del CDD – Centro Documentazione Donne di Bologna, ha collaborato dal 1980 all''87 con Radio Città del Capo di Bologna e negli anni 2000, come poeta ha fatto parte del «Gruppo 98 poesia», costituito da poete. È stata per diversi anni nella redazione della rivista di poesia **«Voci della Luna»** e fa parte della **SIL – Società Italiana delle Letterate**. Cura piccoli eventi poetici. Ha iniziato a scrivere poesia in maturità e ha pubblicato le raccolte: ***Oggetti*** (Mantova, Corraini, 2013) con la prefazione di Niva Lorenzini, ***Mobili e altre minuzie*** (Udine, Dars, 2015), che ha vinto, tra gli altri, il 1° premio del concorso «Elsa Buiese» 2015 e del «Premio Paese delle Donne 2016, Poesia edita», **Certe sere altri pretesti** (e-book con il sito La Recherche, 2016), ***Azioni e ricette*** silloge in ***Prontuario lirico per la difesa muliebre***, antologia con altre tre poete: A. Carnaroli, A.Toscano, F. Genti (Milano, Sartoria Utopia, 2022), una silloge nell'antologia *Connessioni* (Trieste, Van, 2022). Ha curato l'antologia «**Della propria voce**» (Bologna, Qudulibri, 2016) che contiene anche una sua silloge. **Rumore di fondo** raccolta di poesie edita da Puntoacapo, 2023. Ha scritto anche per il teatro. La ballata sul precariato **Cosa farò da grande** (inedito) ha vinto il premio teatrale «Reading sul fiume» Bologna 2017.

Tre inediti notturni

Garbage

Quella piattaforma di fiori
galleggiante di colori e colori
accesi e vivi come le nostre
le nostre televisioni
le nostre primavere

inattaccabile inaffondabile
l'onda la dipana e lei si ricompone
l'uragano la sconquassa e lei si ricompatta
galleggia la plastica tutta insieme
si prepara e si prepara
ad affrontare intonsa secoli futuri
un fuori programma per noi
nonostante la pubblicità.

Esterno notte

La finestra si apre a suoni
di una nuova estate in arrivo

il caos regna
il tutto e il niente si confondono
con noia senza consiglio
la notte si divaga

le matasse sono tutte annodate
le rose belle da togliere il fiato

dai social ognuno esibisce,
pare vinta una nuova partita,
pur se la vetrina appare opaca
e non una voce amica.

Sogni agitati

Ora, al girare degli equinozi
eppure ci stupisce la nascita del fiore
di una bacca perfino
di meraviglie temporali

subito timbri neri ci portano alle nostre povertà
la fotosintesi non darà casa ai nostri figli
che la ragione non serve a tranquillizzare

(Dal verso di Marta Fabiani “di meraviglie temporali”)

Tutto normale

Ancora normale

E di nuovo è domenica di nuovo mattina
oppure mercoledì o martedì anche

allora alle 7:30 di nuovo la radio apre una giornata nuova
dice le notizie nuove
uguali a quelle nuove di ieri
uguali a quelle nuove di ieri l'altro.

Non si distingue più un giorno dall'altro
quanti morti, quante bombe, quante sganciate esattamente

come fosse normale
una domenica uguale
uguale al mercoledì oppure al martedì
ora non ricordo.

Cambia lo scandalo del giorno
la nefandezza compiuta oggi
da un politico oppure da un altro.
Sempre uguale lo sconforto.
Tutto quasi normale
cambia giusto il conto finale

oggi no, non siamo ancora al finale.

Macerie

Non cambia il panorama
le macerie sono tutte uguali. Dove siamo?
Una città maciullata è priva di forma
il panorama di macerie
sovrappone una città con l'altra
non si distingue
dove erano le strade
dove erano le case
quale via era questa, non si capisce.
È la stessa via distrutta ieri?
È un›altra?

questi mandano a morte la gente a milioni
per tornaconto proprio
tutti questi danno la colpa a degli altri
pensando di farla franca
noi si può solo gridare e restare a guardare.

chi ne approfitta per produrre più armi
meno istruzione, meno ricerca, meno futuro.

Noi che vogliamo più pace
ci troviamo a fare più guerra
a cadere in contraddizione
senza volere.
Che fa comodo a tanti un'economia di guerra

ma poi, dai, gridiamo la pace
ed eccoci ancora, possiamo
andare in centro a Natale
sentirci salvi quest'anno ancora
per i pacchetti, per studiare voli low-cost
per il mercatino tradizionale
cercare il panettone con lo sconto migliore
svaligiare i negozi per il black friday

possiamo tornare a casa poi
accendere la televisione e mentre
ceni con un buon minestrone
deglutire notizie di quante persone
sono morte oggi
un po' meno di ieri. Mi pare.

tanto poi un’altra notizia
cancella quelle di guerra
un’altra terribile cancella quest’ultima
poi un’altra e un’altra e un’altra
alla fine poi per fortuna
c’è lo sport che cancella tutto.

Alla fine ci vuole
un pezzettino di dolce
per chiudere cena

alzarsi
andare a vedere un film sulla tre
svegliarsi di notte, fingere
di non sapere perché.

John Graham Davies

John Graham Davies is a British-Canadian actor and writer. His stage plays include *Taking Sides*, a one-man play about the Bosnian civil war which he performed around the world and on the BBC World Service, and *Beating Berlusconi!,* a political comedy about Liverpool, its football club and its politics. This was published in Italy as *Ho battuto Berlusconi!* (66thand2nd, Rome) and performed in Norway as *Sla Berlusconi!*. His co-written play (*Unsung*, with James Quinn) about the blind Liverpool abolitionist Edward Rushton was performed at the Liverpool Everyman. He has taught Creative Writing at the University of Bolton and Performance at John Moore's University, Liverpool.

Until the Spanish Civil War of 1936-38, Pablo Neruda had been primarily celebrated as one of the great modern love poets of the Spanish language. The war changed that. It drew Neruda into the centre of politics.

His increasingly angry denunciations of General Franco resulted in some critics chiding him for straying away from the true subject of poetry - love. His contempt for this conservative attitude jumps out of «I'm Explaining a Few Things» («Explico Algunas Cosas», 1938).

This great poem, like Picasso's painting, was created in response to the bombing of civilians by Hitler and Mussolini's airforces at Guernica in 1937. This atrocity resulted in the death of over 1000 civilians. As of today, October 17th, 2024, over fifty times that number have been buried in the rubble of Gaza. Treading, I hope carefully, in Neruda's footprints, I have tried to echo his poetic fury. But in addition to expressing my own feelings about this epoch defining genocide, l thought it important to see October 7th, 2023 not as a date in itself, but an explosion at the end of a long, tortuous process of meandering exile.

I'm Explaining a Few Things (after Pablo Neruda)

The cultural critics are going to say:
Poet, can't you give the politics a rest?
Where are the lilacs, oh poet?
And the poppy-petalled metaphysics?
And the rain,
Spattering its words full of birds and flowers?

Oh, have no fear, we'll tell you all about flowers.

My grandmother, my Tata, loved geraniums;
her scarlet Haifa garden, swallowed in '48.
Flowers followed her, driven from camp to camp,
like the Wandering Jew of old: Tripoli, Shatila, Askar.
And then, Gaza.
Here, trapped between the barbed wire and the sea

So now her great grandchildren chirrup round the broken streets of El Baheer,
On the edge of Khan Younis, with its mosques and clocks and uncollected rubbish.
And we make the life we can. Our life.
Sometimes with electricity, more often not.
And every few years we look to the skies.

From El Baheer you can gaze north
over Palestine's dry face:
a leather ocean.
Then south through green citrus groves, to Al Mawasi.

Our house! Karim called it the house of flowers,
because in every cranny crimson geraniums burst,
like the blood of the living.
A noble-looking home, with its dogs and children.
And we lived, always with one eye on the sky.

Around us, everything loud with big voices.
The salt of merchandise: in the better moments
Fatima's oil flowing into ladles,
Figs and almonds from Al Zahra,
and the deep murmur
of feet and hands and cries, swelling in the streets.
Metres, litres, the sharp
market measure of life.
Stacked-up fish, ivory potatoes, bottled water.
And wave on wave of tomatoes rolling down to the sea.

And then, one morning, the sky shrieked,
fire leapt out of the earth
devouring human beings -
and from then on the scream of explosions,
and from then on grey rubble and blood.
Pious men with jets,
kevlar-wearing bandits with shapely teeth,
heroes who holiday each year in Disney Florida,
butchers with fake rabbis spewing blessings
came through the sky to kill children.
And the blood of children ran through the streets,
without fuss, like children's blood.

Jackals, that the jackals would despise!
Stones that the dry thistle would bite on and spit out!
Vipers that the vipers would abominate.

Face to face with them, I have seen the red blood
of Palestine tower like a tide
to drown them in one wave!

Crazed colonisers: see my dead house!
Look at broken Gaza:
from every house, instead of flowers,
the heads of grey children grow from the rubble.
And in every mind
Gaza's name crystallises
And from every crime bullets are born,
to one day pierce their desiccated hearts.

And the critics ask: why doesn't his poetry
speak of dreams and leaves
and the great olive groves of his native land?

Don't you see the blood in the streets?
Don't you see
the blood in the streets?!!
Don't you see
the blood in the streets?!!!

John Graham Davies (after Pablo Neruda, translated by Nathaniel Tarn)

Recensioni

Diego Saglia, *I mondi di Jane Austen*, Roma, Carocci, 2024, pp. 240, 25 euro.

Che un classico sia tale anche in virtù dei discorsi che si sono sviluppati nel tempo a partire da esso è *una verità universalmente riconosciuta*; meno scontata è la capacità di mantenere utili e interessanti questi discorsi. Ci riesce magistralmente Diego Saglia che, inserendosi in una tradizione bicentenaria di saggi su Jane Austen, costruisce il suo volume *I mondi di Jane Austen* come una rete ipertestuale all'interno della quale navigare con piacere e accrescimento. A partire dall'autrice *Regency* e dalle sue opere, Saglia si muove nei diversi capitoli del volume edito da Carocci fra l'allargamento dello sguardo al contesto in cui ha vissuto Jane Austen e la citazione puntuale di personaggi e situazioni della narrativa austeniana.

Il doppio movimento di allontanamento e accostamento è dispiegato in otto capitoli: al primo, introduttivo ma già densamente informativo (sui confini geografici, il panorama storico e gli Austen che lo abitavano), seguono capitoli in cui il contesto culturale, sociale, politico, economico ed editoriale in cui Jane Austen ha vissuto, letto e scritto vengono scandagliati con dovizia di particolari, abbondanza di aneddoti e una vivacità cha fa venire in mente la *Time Traveller's Guide to Regency Britain* di Ian Mortimer (2020). Il quadro storico viene delineato nelle relazioni imperialistiche della Gran Bretagna con il mondo esterno e nelle concrete ripercussioni della politica estera sulla vita di Austen, come la partenza di sua zia Philadelphia alla volta dell'India sulla *fishing fleet* di nubili: come osserva Saglia, «Le vicende della famiglia Austen mettono in evidenza come questi fenomeni transnazionali e globali si ripercuotono sulla vita degli individui e delle famiglie» [p. 44]. Il mondo delineato a partire da Jane Austen si rivela interconnesso, e i riferimenti, anche cursorî, presenti nei romanzi e nelle lettere di Austen sono approfonditi e ampliati in modo da mostrare come le pennellate austeniane contengano panorami. Saglia ricostruisce, a beneficio del lettore avido di informazioni, la vita culturale di Londra e i suoi teatri di fine Settecento e inizio Ottocento prendendo spunto dall'accenno al Drury Lane, nel cui atrio Willoughby apprende, da conoscenti in cui si è imbattuto per caso, della grave malattia di Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility*; o ancora, il riferimento all'episodio, in *Emma*, in cui Harriet Smith e Robert Martin si rincontrano è occasione per un focus sui teatri «illegittimi».

La costruzione tematica dei capitoli consente di ripercorrere la vita di Jane Austen (peraltro schedata nella cronologia finale) riconnettendola ai temi dell'identità britannica e agli eventi che in quegli anni contribuiscono a forgiarla: «Quella British è un'identità collettiva, un sentimento che accomuna scozzesi, inglesi e gallesi (e irlandesi protestanti): mentre si solidifica la realtà

istituzionale del Regno di Gran Bretagna (e poi del Regno Unito di Gran Bretagna e Irlanda), emerge gradualmente un'identità trasversale fondata sulla partecipazione alla stessa storia e a un progetto condiviso – protestante, imperiale, commerciale, antifrancese e anticontinentale» [p. 60].

Nei *Mondi di Jane Austen* si risponde alle curiosità relative alle modalità di trasporto all'inizio del XIX secolo, trattando con serietà il tema delle passeggiate, a cui sono ricondotti l'acquerello a opera di Cassandra di sua sorella Jane, ritratta di spalle in campagna, le passeggiate di Catherine Morland a Bath in *Northanger Abbey* e l'infausta passeggiata, in *Persuasion*, terminata con la caduta di Louisa Musgrove a Lyme Regis. La considerazione riservata all'infanzia è trattata in un paragrafo dedicato ai bambini, in cui la descrizione dei piccoli festanti Gardiner è ricondotta al rapporto di Jane alla nipote orfana Anna, quasi una figlia per lei, e Cassandra, così come il mondo materiale Regency è scandagliato a partire dagli oggetti citati da Austen nelle sue lettere, dai lasciti alla sua morte e dalla sua passione per i cappellini.

Il volume di Saglia brulica di vita perché accompagna il lettore fra le vie, i parchi e gli intrattenimenti culturali fruiti da Austen trattandone con minuzia e naturalezza; l'andamento tematico, per approfondimenti e affondi, si rivela particolarmente utile per la didattica contemporanea universitaria perché vicino alle modalità con cui si muove la curiosità odierna di studenti e studentesse, con brevi focus che possono essere letti anche in maniera indipendente, con una scaletta che può essere costruita in base all'interesse, ed è un utile *companion* a chi, rapito dalla smania Regency – fortunatamente riaccesa negli ultimi anni, sebbene mai realmente sopita – volesse, magari a partire dall'ucronia di *Bridgerton*, scoprire come funzionasse davvero la società al tempo di Austen, anche negli aspetti più crudi del colonialismo, sebbene solo adombrati in *Mansfield Park*.

I mondi di Jane Austen si chiude con un documentatissimo e godibile capitolo sul mondo editoriale, mostrando Jane Austen consapevole nel gestire la propria carriera di scrittrice, ironicamente gelosa dei successi altrui e determinata a vivere del proprio lavoro, che ci ha fornito dei classici della letteratura in grado di generare ancora altra scrittura e altri lettori.

Carlotta Susca

Lorenzo Mattei, Angela Annese, a cura di, *Oltre la diva. Presenze femminili nel teatro musicale romantico*, Bari, Cacucci, 2023, pp. 224, 16 euro.

Oltre la diva. Presenze femminili nel teatro musicale romantico rappresenta l'esito di un articolato progetto svolto in sinergia tra l'Università degli Studi

«Aldo Moro» e il Conservatorio di Musica «Niccolò Piccinni» di Bari, concretizzatosi dapprima in una giornata di studi e quindi nel volume edito da Cacucci.

Come esplicitato dai curatori, il titolo fa riferimento a un altro ruolo che l'artista donna poteva avere oltre a quello di interprete. Se quest'ultimo le era riconosciuto socialmente e le otteneva manifestazioni entusiastiche e apprezzamenti, l'attività della composizione al femminile poteva invece destare qualche perplessità ed essere relegata ad ambienti circoscritti, se non addirittura esclusivamente casalinghi con «brani salottieri o antologie didattiche indirizzati al fruitore dilettante per un innocuo consumo domestico e ricreativo» [pp. VI-VIII].

Il fine ultimo dei saggi qui allineati è quello di «mostrare in che modo la dialettica di genere abbia influenzato le scelte compositive (degli uomini come delle donne), in qual misura le donne abbiano determinato alcuni canali della grande committenza e quale collocazione abbiano trovato in esso le compositrici» [risvolto di copertina]. Questa inedita prospettiva offre inevitabilmente un ventaglio di sguardi di taglio sociologico e antropologico che si concentrano innanzitutto sul mondo romantico, ma che prevedono anche un'apertura sul prima e sul dopo, con un preludio sul tardo Settecento e un postludio sul primo Novecento e affrontano altresì il tema del teatro musicale in senso lato, inserendo anche approfondimenti sul mondo della danza e su quello attoriale.

I saggi, allineati secondo l'ordine cronologico definito dalle biografie dei personaggi, hanno come protagoniste soprattutto cantanti, che talora presentano tratti comuni: abbandonano volontariamente – in alcuni casi non senza rovelli interiori – la carriera per dedicarsi a cause filantropiche o alla famiglia o ancora all'insegnamento e spesso partecipano attivamente alle questioni politiche, prendendo posizioni più decise degli uomini della loro famiglia. Certamente tra i pregi di questo volume vi è innanzitutto quello di aver puntato l'attenzione su alcuni nomi non particolarmente conosciuti e in secondo luogo di aver valorizzato gli aspetti meno plateali, per così dire collaterali, e per questo trascurati sin qui dagli studi, ma forse più intimi e più veri, delle singole personalità.

Lorenzo Mattei intende offrire per la prima volta una visione d'assieme a un tema già ampiamente battuto finora attraverso contributi sui singoli personaggi – l'indagine sulla vita e l'attività delle compositrici d'opera tra Sette e Ottocento – corredandola di considerazioni d'ordine sociologico ed estetico. E così definisce ambiti geografici, elenca e descrive – citandone anche specifici passaggi e soffermandosi sulle strutture complessive – opere di Anna Amalia di Prussia, Maria Rosa Coccia, Maria Teresa Agnesi, Maria Antonia Walpurgis esemplate sul modello italiano, per spostarsi poi ai *Singspiele*, agli spettacoli inglesi e alle forme di teatro francese.

Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) è invece la protagonista esclusiva del testo di Franca Dellarosa che ricostruisce il paesaggio sonoro realizzato dall'artista

in alcune delle sue performance più apprezzate che segnarono una svolta nei ruoli da lei impersonati, da Lady Macbeth a Ermione (*The Winter's Tale*). In quest'ultima l'autrice rimarca specificamente l'interpretazione rimasta memorabile per la totale immedesimazione nel personaggio della regina.

Attilio Cantore si impegna invece a tratteggiare il ritratto di Isabella Colbran (1784-1845) in quanto compositrice, ricostruendone nel contempo una parte della biografia attraverso il ricordo dell'abate Giuseppe Bertini e le testimonianze delle sue varie esecuzioni nate alla scuola del Marinelli prima e del Crescentini poi. Intrecciando l'attività di cantante con quella di compositrice, si evidenzia il suo debutto editoriale con raccolte di *petits airs italiens* grazie al parigino Magasin de musique creato dalla collaborazione di Cherubini (maestro da lei quasi venerato) con Méhul, Kreutzer, Rode.

I vari aspetti della personalità e della carriera di Carolina Ungher-Sabatier (1803-1877) sono messi in rilievo da Bianca Maria Antolini. Primadonna nei ruoli drammatici tra le più celebrate della prima metà dell'Ottocento, dopo un esordio nel genere comico; esecutrice di *Lieder* nelle dimore di Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn e a sua volta amabile ospite nel salotto di Firenze come in quello di Parigi e di La Tour de Farges; didatta e talent scout, consulente di vari musicisti e infine compositrice di *Lieder*, *mélodies* e stornelli, la Ungher si impone come figura di primo piano nel mondo culturale prima ancora che artistico del tempo.

Il ruolo artistico e filantropico di Enrichetta Pollastri (1810-1882) emerge dal contributo di Pinuccia Carrer. Da *étoile* della Scala e di altri teatri europei, la donna, divenuta contessa Mondolfo, si prodiga a supportare dapprima le istituzioni scolastiche e la piccola comunità di Monguzzo e poi l'istituto e l'asilo dei ciechi di Milano lasciando a questi una consistente parte del suo patrimonio.

Modello inconsueto di primadonna è quello che Paola Ciarlantini delinea di Clara Novello (1818-1908), che, dopo aver calcato le scene dei più importanti teatri europei e aver intessuto amicizie con i principali compositori del tempo, visse attivamente l'intero arco risorgimentale italiano, dopo essersi trasferita dalla nativa Londra nelle Marche, terra del marito. La sua figura si distacca da quella dell'artista del tempo sia per il suo eclettismo nella scelta del repertorio (dal sacro al cameristico, oltre a quello operistico) che per il suo attivismo in ambito organizzativo.

Il saggio di Mariacarla De Giorgi si sofferma a puntualizzare la concezione estetica del canto di Pauline Viardot (1821-1910), mettendo in rilievo il suo personalissimo approccio interpretativo, che la pone come ideale *trait d'union* tra il virtuosismo esecutivo belcantistico e la nuova concezione romantica dell'arte musicale. Tale posizione la fece riconoscere come «sacerdotessa dell'ideale in musica» [p. 116] sollecitando verso di lei l'attenzione di molti musicisti e intellettuali del tempo.

Orietta Caianiello si concentra sulla figura di Marietta Piccolimini (1834-1893), cantante famosa al pari delle altre sin qui elencate e anch'ella decisa ad un certo punto della vita ad abbandonare la carriera per dedicarsi alla famiglia, a cause filantropiche ma anche politiche. Prima di questo momento però riuscì a coinvolgere l'intero ambito domestico nella sua professione «mettendo in atto un principio di trasversalità sociale del tutto innovativo» [p. 132].

Il ritratto che Cristina Scuderi tratteggia di Romilda Pantaleoni (1847-1917) si restringe a un periodo preciso della sua attività artistica (1883-1887), ma mira a porre in luce anche questioni di prassi esecutiva e di repertorio, affrontando specificamente due produzioni che contribuirono ad accrescere la sua celebrità: *Gioconda* e *Otello* di Verdi.

Il volume è concluso dal saggio di Angela Annese, che sembra quasi proporre una sintesi ideale di tutte le posizioni precedentemente espresse e non solo per la tipologia di vita e di carriera vissute da Clara Kathleen Rogers (1844-1931) (un 'prima' collegato all'attività di interprete in giro per il mondo e un 'dopo' vissuto in una dimensione più domestica), ma per la riflessione di sé che quell'artista lascia nella sua autobiografia. Essa riassume le caratteristiche che hanno contraddistinto la vita delle personalità qui approfondite: la modernità di spirito, il vivere «cercando con determinazione e cogliendo con accortezza ogni possibile opportunità per assecondare le proprie passioni, coltivare i propri interessi, compiere le proprie scelte, esprimersi con la propria voce»; il guardare indietro «senza rimpianti, orgogliosa delle sue realizzazioni ma pur sempre, serenamente, insoddisfatta, […]; secondo un sentimento dell'esistenza umana […] che si definisce nella costruzione della propria identità in rapporto a ciò che la circonda e cui appartiene» [p. 185].

Mariateresa Dellaborra

Claude Vignon, *Contes à faire peur*, Préface de Sylvie Camet, Introduction de Jacques Sirgent, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2024, pp. 250, 22 euro.

«Elle publiait de mauvais vers; […] elle émettait des opinions exaltées ; mais on lui pardonnait en faveur de sa jeunesse et surtout de sa beauté». Voilà en quels termes, dans *Souvenirs d'un demi-siècle*, Maxime du Camp se débarrasse de l'auteure de ce recueil paru en 1857, et que suivirent une vingtaine de romans de mœurs; grâce à cette édition, elle revient après un long refoulement, offrant au lecteur l'occasion de découvrir son talent. Malgré le choix d'un pseudonyme qui ne fit pas d'elle une seconde George Sand, Claude Vignon (née Alexandre-Victorine Cadiot) avait assurément d'autres atouts,

à part sa beauté, pour se faire apprécier: romancière, journaliste, rédactrice de *La Voix des Femmes*, sculptrice de qualité (on lui doit notamment les bas-reliefs de la fontaine Saint-Michel à Paris), cette femme indépendante, qui, à dix-huit ans, s'échappe de la maison familiale et se marie avec Éliphas Lévi, le futur occultiste, avant de l'abandonner pour d'autres liaisons, débute en littérature avec ce recueil dont le titre, à double issue, semble à mesure de son tempérament polymorphe: car, s'il est légitime, voire canonique, d'interpréter ces 'Contes à faire peur' en tant que générateurs d'épouvante et d'émotions négatives, pourquoi ne pas y voir aussi la caustique anticipation du refus de la critique masculine face à la production d'une femme hors norme qui ne pourra être qu'une production épouvantable? Reste que, comme l'écrit Sylvie Camet dans la Préface, «La vraie puissance du titre de l'ouvrage ne proviendrait pas du mot 'peur' mais du mot 'conte', […] cet outil exceptionnel pour distiller l'inquiétude» et que Vignon manie avec aisance, respirant à pleins poumons l'air romantique du temps: dans ses contes, cette débutante chevronnée plonge son 'fantastique' dans un tissu narratif fortement empreint de réalisme et ce n'est pas un hasard si elle a emprunté son nom de plume à un personnage de *Béatrix* de Balzac. Tout en montrant qu'elle connaît de près le genre choisi, depuis ses modèles anglo-saxons et allemands jusqu'à la production des auteurs contemporains français, l'écrivaine se singularise d'abord par le retour d'un thème – le sentiment de culpabilité –, qui hante la plupart de ses personnages et qui semble déjà ouvrir la voie aux sombres contes de la dernière saison de Maupassant. Dans «Le dîner des trépassés», récit à l'ambiance hoffmannienne, le voyage infernal du coupable dans son monde sans paix se clôt sur une lutte désespérée avec le spectre du frère qu'il a trahi; dans «Les dix-milles francs du diable», les fantômes des gens tués par avidité poursuivent l'assassin avant de le conduire à la folie; dans «Le reflet de conscience», le souvenir de l'adversaire éliminé obsède le protagoniste jusqu'à contraindre celui-ci à fuir les glaces, où toujours apparaît, au lieu du sien, le visage de l'autre: «Ils m'ont mené au Café… au Café de la Mairie, tout tapissé de glaces, comprends-tu ? …je l'ai vu… partout… dans les coins… sous toutes les faces… jouant quand je jouais… parlant quand je parlais, buvant quand je buvais… Je l'ai vu hors de lui, furieux, terrible comme un échappé de l'enfer et se multipliant mille fois, quand je me débattais en brisant les glaces…» [p. 204]. Dans «La Dalle», la ressemblance entre sa fille vivante et la sœur qu'il a étouffée par jalousie, amène le père assassin à confondre la vivante et la morte en un seul spectre qui lui parle à chaque heure de son crime et qui finit par le tuer.

Comme l'écrit Camet: «Toute l'attention est portée à la décomposition progressive de l'être gangrené par son épouvantable secret» [p. 6]. Ces contes semblent suivre les mouvements obscurs d'une âme humaine, poussée à projeter hors d'elle-même la noirceur dont elle tâche de se délivrer. Un autre

thème, cher au genre fantastique – celui du vampirisme –, inspire les deux autres récits du recueil, «Les morts se vengent» et «Isobel, la ressuscitée»: sous la plume de Vignon, le vampire est uniquement femme, il est d'une beauté émouvante et porte en lui le souvenir d'avoir été cruellement soumis à «la tyrannie des vivants qui règnent sur la terre» [p. 22]. C'est donc en forme d'ultime vengeance que les femmes vampires de Vignon laissent leur marque de sang sur le visage des hommes : elles blessent comme elles crieraient par protestation, pour dénoncer leur état de minorité et faire de la morsure un acte de force posthume. C'est là que la nouveauté de cette écriture s'affirme: creusant dans les lieux sombres de la conscience ou donnant aux femmes une arme symbolique pour sortir de l'enfermement, Claude Vignon «transforme le fantastique en une pensée libre qui s'emploie à empêcher l'identification aux conventions» [p. 8].

Franca Zanelli Quarantini

Notizie

Regency Mania Conference

Bologna, 25-26 October 2024

Two days dedicated to the Regency, an age of extraordinary cultural activity that still influences our modern imagination. The event was organized by Serena Baiesi and Carlotta Farese of the UNIBO section of CISR (Centro Interuniversitario per lo Studio del Romanticismo) in collaboration with JASIT (Jane Austen Society of Italy).

The first day focused on the Regency Period and on discussions about how, even nowadays, this short but significant period influences our contemporary imagination. The convention focused on presentations regarding the customs and traditions of the Regency Period, for instance the Male and Female Fashion of the Regency Period, the Scandals of Carolina Brunswick and the Royals, and the Figure of the Dandy.

Speakers included Lilla Maria Crisafulli, honorary president of CISR Diego Saglia, current president of CISR, Marco Canani, Nicoletta Caputo, Elisa Bizzotto, Maurizio Ascari, Gino Scatasta, Serena Baiesi, Gilberta Golinelli, Carlotta Farese and the representatives of JASIT Silvia Ogier, Maria Teresa Cascella and Giuseppe Ierolli.

On the second day, an adaptation of Elizabeth Inchbald's play *Lovers' Vows*, which became renowned as it appeared in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, was staged at DamsLab Theatre in Bologna. This version, staged by the director Lea Cirianni, featured a multi-voice narrator that marks the rhythm and the events of the story, voiced by all the characters, and a shortened, but nevertheless passionate, version of the original play. The actors Maria Teresa Casalone, Viola De Paulis, Alessandro Di Vita, Giulia Marani, Anja Serena Rizzardi, Azaria Scavuzzo and Niccolò Zucchelli brought to life the so-called "lost play" for the public, with a touching performance and melancholic, but equally uplifting interpretation.

New Byron Museum

Opening of the Byron Museum and Risorgimento Museum:
Ravenna, Via Cavour, 54,
November 29, 2024

Once hosted inside the Church of San Romualdo, the Byron Museum and Risorgimento Museum is now inside Palazzo Guiccioli, overlooking the central Via Cavour. The permanent exhibition dedicated to Byron tells his life and works, thanks to various multimedia devices curated by Studio Azzurro and many precious original editions and memorabilia, portraits and busts of the protagonists– medallions and sentimental memories collected by Teresa at the time of their intense relationship and now back to the home where they belong.

Website:
https://www.palazzoguiccioli.it/museobyron/

International Conference: Romanticism across Borders

Université Paris Cité, Hôtel de Lauzun,
March 24-25, 2025

The conference aims to bring together researchers specializing in Romantic studies, and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries more generally. An extension of an international virtual seminar that has been running since 2022, this conference aims to reinforce ties between academics beyond national borders.

Funded by the 'Paris Oxford Partnership' and involving scholars from both Université Paris Cité and the University of Oxford, it particularly hopes to extend already existing ties between these institutions. The conference will be followed by a collection of essays, achieving a long-term impact by fostering further collaborative partnerships. The theme of borders in the Romantic period, moreover, was originally designed to correspond to the activities of the research group 'Frontières du Littéraire' which is part of the LARCA Research Lab at Université Paris Cité, and of the Paris-Oxford Partnership.

INCS Conference: Speed and Acceleration

Genoa, Italy,
June 18-20, 2025

Keynote speakers:
Clare Pettitt (Cambridge), Diego Saglia (Parma)

As shown by Hartmut Rosa and others, the experience of an accelerating pace of change across various dimensions of life is a distinguishing trait of modernity, and a result of wide-ranging transformations. Advances in technology lead to an acceleration of process, communication and information flow, which leads to the rapid development of technologies that influence how we interact in the various spheres of life. Social practices and norms are evolving faster, demanding quicker adaptations from individuals and institutions, as testified to by the turnovers in social roles, personal identities and societal expectations. Throughout, speed and technology are connected, but they are not synonyms: high-speed technology has made life faster, but has not necessarily made it easier, as contemporary social acceleration results in a culture of «chronic time famine» (H. Rosa and W. E. Scheuerman, High-Speed Society 2009).

Life in technologically advanced countries entails the paradox of being pressed for time, while having at one's disposal an amazing range of time-saving technologies.

This implies that, historically speaking, we are now positioned to reconsider the past in this light and explore the way the previous experiences of accelerations impacted society. In this respect, the nineteenth century, shaped by the Industrial Revolution and ended with another peak of social acceleration, provides fertile ground for scholarly investigations.

This conference will focus on how intellectuals, writers, artists, politicians, scientists and economists articulated the discourse of social interactions, and how they positioned themselves regarding speeding-up technologies. How they reacted to the feeling that history was accelerating its pace, and the previous experiences were becoming obsolete/irrelevant in modern time. How the changing pace of life was conceptualized and artistically represented and which dimensions of life, society, or geographical areas, were perceived as accelerating.

Conference website:
https://incs2025.it/

49th International Byron Conference: "The Years that Followed": The Afterlives of Lord Byron

University of Pisa, Italy,
June 30 - July 5, 2025

Keynote speakers:
Mark Sandy (Durham), Diego Saglia (Parma), Mirka Horová (Prague)

In the year following the poet's bicentenary, the **49th International Byron Association Conference** will delve into the poet's enduring and multifaceted legacy from the immediate aftermath of his death to the twenty-first century. The Conference aims to investigate Byron's perspectives on various forms of futurity– historical, political, personal, and spiritual, among others – as well as the place he and his works have held in culture and literature since 1824, both in Britain and overseas.

Hosted in the historic city of Pisa, where Byron himself once resided, the conference will convene literary scholars, historians, and enthusiasts from around the world. Through keynote addresses, scholarly presentations, and panel discussions, participants will have the opportunity to engage in a rich debate about the poet, his times and his works.

Complementing the academic program, the conference will offer a wide range of cultural events, including visits to sites of significance to Byron and other English Romantics, both in Pisa and the surrounding areas (Bagni di Lucca and Bagni di Pisa, Lerici and San Terenzo), as well as musical performances, exhibitions, and poetry readings.

Conference website:
https://www.iabsconferencepisa2025.com/

The Global Jane Austen: Celebrating and Commemorating 250 years of Jane Austen

University of Southampton,
July 10-12, 2025

Confirmed Speakers Include: Susan Allen Ford; Serena Baiesi, Janine Barchas; Jennie Batchelor; Annika Bautz; Isabelle Bour; Joe Bray; Linda Bree; Inger Brody; Valérie Cossy; Richard Cronin; Carlotta Farese; Susannah Fullerton; Sayre Greenfield; Isobel Grundy; Christine Kenyon Jones; Freya

Johnston; Michael Kramp; Devoney Looser; Deidre Lynch; Anthony Mandal; Juliet McMaster; Marie Nedregotten Sørbø; Peter Sabor; Diego Saglia; Rebecca Smith; Jane Stabler; Kathryn Sutherland; Bharat Tandon; Janet Todd; Anne Toner; Linda Troost; Juliette Wells

Austen scholars and enthusiasts are invited to the University of Southampton, Hampshire, for a conference commemorating Austen's birth in the year 1775. In 1976, Juliet McMaster introduced an edited collection of essays resulting from a bicentenary birthday celebration for Austen in the following terms: To celebrate the two-hundredth anniversary of Jane Austen's birth in October, in Western Canada, is no doubt to be guilty of a comic incongruity. But as though to compensate for the misdemeanor, the papers delivered at the conference have a common and exact focus on period and locale.

50 years after the bicentenary conference at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, the scholarly landscape of Austen studies has changed. Where many monographs and edited collections of essays still maintain an 'exact focus on period and locale', research informed by book history, the material, archival and linguistic turns in literary criticism, postcolonial studies and adaptation theory (among others) has flourished in the intervening decades. The ever-expanding corpus of adaptations, sequels and prequels has proven fruitful territory for a consideration of Austen's reception, in its broadest sense. Austen's transformations into other languages and into other cultures make her a Global author.

Conference webpage:
https://www.southampton.ac.uk/humanities/news/events/2024/08/the-global-jane-austen-celebrating-and-commemorating-250-years-of-jane-austen-english-university-of-southampton.page

International Conference: Transnational Romanticism

University of Göttingen, Germany,
July 23-26, 2025

Keynote speakers:
James Engell (Harvard), Ralf Haekel (Leipzig), Diego Saglia (Parma)

The conference will be focusing on the first-ever journey Samuel Taylor Coleridge undertook outside England in 1798, with the Wordsworths. Coleridge's time in Göttingen, Germany, initiated him as a central agent in the diffusion of German literature in England and beyond Anglo-centric spaces.

Through his knowledge of Greek, Latin, German, Italian, Sanskrit and Hebrew texts, Coleridge plumbed strata of meaning and acquired original insights, which he adopted in his own contents. As a translator, he produced numerous translations, developed theoretical insights and perceived the acts of translation as an interlinguistic creative process.

The seminar will focus not only on Coleridge, but more widely on Romantic exchanges with foreign languages and cultures, not limited to Western-European and Anglo-centric spheres.

The conference will be hosted in the historic Library where Coleridge worked at Göttingen, and will include an excursion to the beautiful Harz Mountains, following in the footsteps of Coleridge and many Romantic tourists.

For further information, contact:
Transnational.romanticism@uni-goettingen.de

Trans-Romanticism: 34th Annual International Conference on Romanticism

Colorado College,
September 18-21, 2025

The International Conference on Romanticism (ICR) originated in 1991 through a meeting of the minds of a small group of international scholars who agreed on the need for an organization that would support research, the exchange of ideas, and collegiality among scholars of Romanticism in an international, multi-disciplinary, and cross-cultural context.

Annual meetings and colloquia held in the Fall (large meetings) and in the late Spring (small colloquia) and are hosted by a college or university or a group of cooperating schools. All meetings and colloquia are cross-linguistic and interdisciplinary. The annual large meeting normally includes plenary sessions, smaller presentation groups, and workshops, organized around an extended thesis.

The smaller colloquia are restricted to fewer participants and are usually organized around a more tightly conceived topic.

At all ICR gatherings a wide variety of conference goers is sought, including graduate students, and a spirit of fellowship, humane intelligence, and intimacy is cultivated.

Conference website:
https://sites.coloradocollege.edu/icr/